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Poet Lore

A Magazine of Letters

EDITED BY

CHARLOTTE PORTER AND HELEN A. CLARKE

VOLUME XXIII

BOSTON
THE POET LORE COMPANY
1912

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The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

75
532

Fig 2

Poet Lore

TITLE REGISTERED AS A TRADE MARK

A Magazine of Letters

Winter Number

Arti et Veritati.

The Poet Lore Company
Publishers
194 Boylston St Boston U.S.A.

$1.50 a Copy $5.00 a Yea

Poet Lore

November-December, 1912

Twilight . . . . . **Ernst Rosmer** **369**
Translated by Paul H. Grummann

The Two . . . . . **Hofmannsthal** **444**
Translated from the German, by Charles Wharton Stork

EDITORS

CHARLOTTE PORTER HELEN A. CLARKE PAUL H. GRUMMANN

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION

POET LORE is published bi-monthly in the months of January (*New Year's Number*), March (*Spring Number*), May (*Summer Number*), July (*Vacation Number*), September (*Autumn Number*), and December (*Winter Number*). Subscribers not receiving their copies by the end of these months should immediately notify the publishers, who otherwise cannot agree to supply missing numbers.

Annual subscriptions $5.00. Single copies $1.50. As the publishers find that the majority of subscribers desire unbroken volumes, POET LORE will be sent until ordered discontinued and all arrears paid.

CONTRIBUTIONS

should always be accompanied by stamps, provided their return is desired if rejected. The receipt of no contribution is acknowledged unless a special stamped envelope is enclosed for that purpose. While all possible care is taken of manuscripts the editors cannot hold themselves responsible in case of loss.

THE POET LORE COMPANY

194 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, U.S.A.

Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Boston, July 22, 1903

INDEX TO VOLUME XXIII

New Year — Winter, 1912

Baron, Lucille, Trans. — For Happiness, A Play 81
— Stanislav Pshibishevsky 111
Beckmann, J. H.— Hauptmann and Shakespeare 56
Browning, The Paradoxical Ethics of — Oscar W. Firkins 348

Character Writing in English Literature — Thomas Ernest Rankin 42
Civic Theater, The — James Platt White 320

Decadence of American Culture: Why? — Florence E. Hyde 64

Echégaray, José — Madman or Saint, A Play 161
Einarsson, Indridi — Sword and Crozier, A Play 225
Einarsson, Indridi — Lee M. Hollander 284
English Hexameter — H. W. Boyd Mackay 139
Epigram: Life — Schaukal 79
Eventide — Paul Verlaine 368
Ewing, Thomas, Jr.— Horace's Ode, IV: 7 80

Feipel, Louis N.— A Perennial Witticism *vs.* A Shakespearean Crux 341
Firkins, Oscar W.— The Paradoxical Ethics of Browning 348
For Happiness, A Play — Stanislav — Pshibishevsky 81
Fortune Favors Fools, A Play — Ivan Narodny 305
Fulda, Ludwig — By Ourselves, A Play 1

Grummann, Paul H. — Modern European Dramatists
— III Arthur Schnitzler 25
— IV Max Halbe 125
Trans.— Twilight, A Play 369

Halbe, Max — Paul H. Grummann 125
Hauptmann and Shakespeare — J. H. Beckmann 56
Hexameter, English — H. W. Boyd Mackay 139
Hofmannsthal — The Two 444
Hollander, Lee M., Trans. — Sword and Crozier, A Play 225
— Indridi Einarsson 284
Horace's Ode, IV: 7 — Thomas Ewing, Jr. 80
Hyde, Florence E.— Decadence of American Culture: Why? 64

Kanawa: A Classical Drama — Motokiyo 222

Lansing, Ruth, Trans.— Madman or Saint, A Play 161

Mackay, H. W. Boyd — English Hexameter 139
Madman or Saint, A Play — José Echégaray 161
Meredith, The "Story" in George — Alta Brunt Sembower 360
Mieler, Maria Ossipovna, Trans.— Fortune Favors Fools, A Play 305
Modern European Dramatists — Paul H. Grummann
— III Arthur Schnitzler 25
— IV Max Halbe 125
Motokiyo — Kanawa: A Classical Drama 222

Narodny, Ivan — Fortune Favors Fools, A Play 305
New Drama, The 145
New Drama, The 290
Nietzsche, Friedrich — Venice 79

Ochiai, T., Trans — Kanawa: A Classical Drama 222
O'Connor, Evelyn — A Possible Source of Shakespeare's Culture. 114

Paradoxical Ethics of Browning, The — Oscar W. Firkins 348
Perennial Witticism, A, *vs.* A Shakespearean Crux — Louis N. Feipel 341
Possible Source of Shakepeare's Culture, A — Evelyn O'Connor 114
Price, William Raleigh, Trans. — Eventide 368
Pshibishevsky, Stanislav — For Happiness, A Play 81
Pshibishevsky, Stanislav — Lucille Baron 111

Rankin, Thomas Ernest — Character Writing in English Literature 42
Rosmer, Ernst — Twilight, A Play 369
Rostrand and Chantecler — Caroline Sheldon 74

Schaukal — Epigram: Life 79
Schnitzler, Arthur — Paul H. Grummann 25
Sembower, Alta Brunt — The "Story" in George Meredith 360
Shakespeare, Hauptmann and — J. H. Beckmann 56
Shakespearean Crux, A Perennial Witticism *vs.* A — Louis N. Feipel 341
Shakespeare's Culture, A Possible Source of — Evelyn O'Connor 114
Sheldon, Caroline — Rostrand and Chantecler 74
Shinnecock Hills — Christine L. Swayne 221
Stork, Charles Wharton, Trans. — Venice 79
— Epigram: Life 79
— The Two 444
"Story" in George Meredith, The — Alta Brunt Sembower 360
Swayne, Christine Liebeneck — Shinnecock Hills 221
Sword and Crozier, A Play — Indridi Einarsson 225

Twilight, A Play — Ernst Rosmer 369
Two, The — Hofmannsthal 444

Venice — Friedrich Nietzsche 79
Verlaine, Paul — Eventide 368

Wally, Haya, Trans. — By Ourselves, A Play 1
White, James Platt — The Civie Theater 320

Poet Lore

VOLUME XXIII WINTER, 1912 NUMBER VI

TWILIGHT

Drama in Five Acts

By Ernst Rosmer (Else Bernstein)

Translated by Paul H. Grummann. With permission of the author

CHARACTERS

Henry Ritter.
Isolde, *his daughter.*
Sabine Graef.
Carl Curtius.
Babine, *cook.*
Anna, *chambermaid.*
A Child.

ACT I

A large room, not particularly deep, on the ground floor. The middle wall, consisting of a sliding door, leads into Isolde's *bedroom. A large glass door at the right, in front, leads into the garden over a veranda. A large window at the right in the rear. Two ordinary doors at the left. The one farther front leads into* Ritter's *bedroom, the other into the corridor. Between the two doors against the wall a comfortable sofa, and over this a photograph of Beethoven. Oval table and armchairs. On the table an open portfolio, photographs, the 'Seven Ravens,' by Schwind. A hanging lamp with an adjustable green shade. At the right, between the corridor and the sliding door, a serving table with wine*

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297199

bottles, glasses, a dish containing pastry. At the left, in the corner between the sliding door and the window, a gentleman's desk placed obliquely. Over it a crayon portrait of ISOLDE. *Between the window and glass door a piano, upon which there is a little bust of Wagner, scattered books, and notes. All of the furniture is of dull brown mahogany, old-fashioned but tasteful and comfortable. The armchairs and the sofa are covered with reddish-brown rep. The glass door almost closed. Through the panes a little red evening glow which soon disappears. It is twilight.* ISOLDE *sits at the table in an armchair, her feet on a footstool, her head leaning to one side, and her shoulders drawn together. Her eyes are closed. In her lap blue eyeglasses. Long blond braids tied with light-blue ribbons. A white summer dress. She turns her head to and fro several times restlessly, presses her hand against her left temple and groans.*

ANNA *comes from the corridor. White cap and white flap-apron. She carries plates, a tablecloth, knives and forks on a tray, which she places on the serving table. She pulls down the hanging lamp and lights a match.*

Isolde (*raises both of her hands over her eyes for protection*).— Don't — don't!

Anna (*blows out the match, frightened*).— Oh, yes, well! I was thinkin', Miss, you'd turned away.

Isolde.— Why don't you open your mouth when you light up? And then one is expected to get well!

Anna.— Want t' set the table fur supper. Mr. Ritter must be a-comin' home soon.

Isolde.— I want no light. You can manage — without it — *that* little setting! Why, it is light still — terribly light. (*She puts on her eyeglasses.*)

Anna (*looking at her furtively while she puts the photographs into the portfolio*).— Miss's been lookin' at pitschers agin. Lots of 'em. With sick eye. Foolish pitschers. Mr. Ritter orter burn up all pitschers. Whole stack of 'em.

Isolde.— Such talk! It doesn't hurt me to look at them. It doesn't hurt me at all. Take them out.

Anna (*pointing toward the door of* RITTER'S *room*).— There?

Isolde (*intensely*).— Goodness, how stupid! Of course! Where do you suppose? Not into the pantry!

(ANNA *goes into* RITTER'S *room with the portfolio.*)

(ISOLDE *takes off the eyeglasses, carefully touches her left eyelid with her handkerchief as if she were wiping away tears, and slowly blows her nose.*)

Anna (*comes back; while she begins to set the table, cunningly*).— Should I tell Mr. Ritter 'bout the pitschers been a-lookin' at?

Isolde.— Oh! Doesn't concern papa. Babbler! (*Presses her hand upon her forehead.*) Headache. Miserable headache.

Anna (*with cunning concern*).— Eye headache?

(ISOLDE *breathes heavier and shorter, again blows her nose.*)

Anna.— Fine cold, Miss's got agin. Nose a-cryin'. Nose tears.

Isolde (*wearily*).— Anna, it is on the bedroom table. Give me — give me the atropine.

Anna (*places the plates in her hand on the table, with a cry of terror*).— Got it already. Adroppeen. Is it the left eye?

Isolde.— Now don't scream right off — that hurts my head — you know I can't bear that — this screaming. Well yes, a bit — no, no, the left eye. Bring it to me, the atropine and the dropper, it is in the drawer.

Anna (*going*).— Pitschers! An' such black uns! Now if they was nice colored ones like the Emperor Joseph on our cakes! Law! Pitschers! (*Separates the middle doors far enough to enable her to get through.*)

Isolde (*irascibly, imitating her*).— Forever this wisdom. You all know better than I do. Now it is supposed to be due to the pictures again. It comes if it pleases, and if it does not please to, it doesn't come. Unendurable!

Anna (*comes back, a little brown medicine bottle and a dropper in her hand*).— S'pose it's good yet?

Isolde.— When — why, when was it filled the last time?

Anna.— It was filled the last time wen the last big inflummashun was of Miss's eyes.

Isolde.— How many weeks ago?

Anna.— Weeks — eight weeks, all right. Wen the grandma of Missus sent the cakes from Vienna. Yas — eight. Them's all ate up already.

Isolde (*the bottle in her hand*).— It is probably still good. I want a clean handkerchief — a white one, not a colored one.

Anna.— But is it surely only the left eye?

Isolde (*has opened the bottle, dipped the dropper into it and withdrawn it, presses out a few drops by way of trial*).— The left one, yes.

Anna.— And awful bad? Like on Christmas eve? Or only like last time?

Isolde (*turns away from her, draws apart the lids of her left eye with her third and fourth fingers and drops a drop in*).— Only as the last time. (*Leans back with eyes closed.*)

Anna.— Is it better — from the droppeen?

Isolde.— Now it is expected to be better again right off! Why, I have hardly taken it. (*Examines the eyeball with the second and third fingers of her left hand.*) I don't know — the eye is so hard, and there is such pressure.

Anna (*not without a certain pleasure*).— Does it jest burn and sting? Law!

Isolde.— You will kill me with your questions. I am suffering and am expected to lecture about it. And even talk! The handkerchief — take this with you (*gives her the bottle and the dropper*) and uncover my bed.

Anna.— Jiminee, to bed! That bad!

Isolde (*wrought up*).— No, it isn't bad at all. Surely I may go to bed if I please. And the handkerchief! The handkerchief!

(ANNA *runs into the bedroom.*)

Isolde (*places the hollow of her hand over her left eye*).— Oh! Oh! (*Breaks out crying.*) Is it *never* going to stop — never!

Anna (*comes back with handkerchief*).— Is it ——

(ISOLDE *controls her sobs.*)

Anna (*after a silence of seconds*).— Sha'n't we jest send fur the purfessur, Miss?

Isolde.— No.

Anna.— Jest t' make your papa feel all right. He'll be turribly upset.

Isolde.— Precisely on account of papa I do not wish it. That's the very thing that will frighten him, to find the doctor here. I'll tell him it's only a bit inflamed and will be well again by to-morrow ——

Anna.— But if it ain't well to-morrow and the doctor'll haf' t' come to-morrow. It's a-goin' that way with to-morrow right along. I send.

Isolde (*straightens up a little*).— And I do not wi — (*sinks back from pain, speaks with teeth set*). Yes. Well!

(ANNA *runs out through the door of the corridor.*)

(ISOLDE *lies silently in the armchair, her eyeglasses over her closed eyes, now and then a very slight sound of pain, without opening her lips. Quick steps ascending the stone steps,* RITTER *opens the glass door and enters. Tall and slender, careless gestures, distinguished but not elegant. Small head, long dark brown hair combed back smoothly. Clean shaven, youthful. Gray summer suit, turn-down collar with a little black silk bow tie, straw hat in his hand, under his arm a couple of books, which he lays on the piano.*)

Ritter.— Treasure! Hello! (*Approaches her joyously.*) How are you getting on?

Isolde.— Thanks — well.

Ritter.— Dark? Purposely?

Isolde.— It is so — I prefer it. I cannot do anything by lamplight anyhow.

Ritter (*stroking his cheek with her hand*).— Well, aren't you going to say anything? About how nicely I am shaved. No more grater about it.

Fine! (*Takes a step forward and stumbles over the footstool, from which* ISOLDE *has withdrawn her feet.*) Thunderation! Now who is so idiotic ——

Isolde.— The footstool, papa, you stumble over that every time.

Ritter (*standing at the table, takes a box of matches out of his pocket*).— Turn around, Bonnie, all the way round. Why, that is — I want to light up. I will keep it quite low at first. This neck-breaking factory!

Isolde (*first lays her kerchief, then both of her hands over her eyes, and turns away completely from the lamp*). But I say, quite low.

Ritter (*lights the lamp, throws the match on the floor and steps on it. Adjusting the green shade*).— 'S that it? Over farther?

Isolde.— Why, where have you been? Tell me.

Ritter (*plants his legs wide apart and stretches up his arms*).— What heat in the city! What heat! And dust! A large city like this is really a piece of brutality. Annihilate it! Simply annihilate it.

Isolde.— Have you been at the post office?

Ritter.— Yes, of course. I got it and had it changed immediately. Fallen again, the Austrian. Miserable money.

Isolde.— And what else? Why don't you tell?

Ritter.— Hm — quite right. Whom did I meet? Czermak of the grand opera. You know. He is to appear here as Lohengrin and Tannhäuser — that fellow! The higher the C the greater the stupidity. In Vienna, of course, he doesn't get an opportunity, and here he tries by all means to star it. Do you still remember how he ruined the glorious solo in the Te Deum for me? A regular asinine tenor!

Isolde.— Did he have anything to tell — about Vienna?

Ritter.— Theater gossip. It's a motley mob — musicians haggling about the conducting of the grand concerts — they haven't a new conductor yet. (*Stops abruptly and rummages in his back coat pocket.*) Why, I brought you something, if I only haven't been sitting on it in the horse car; at the gate of Victory, I just managed to catch it, and since it was already quite late (*he takes out a mashed package, with a doleful countenance*), sat on it.

Isolde.— You stupid! What is it pray tell?

Ritter (*hands it to her*).— Possibly it is fit to eat after all. Pisching tart.

Isolde.— Papa! Who would buy Pisching tart here? Why that is only good in Vienna. A Vienna specialty! When the confectioners' shops are so poor here, at best.

Ritter.— But the drug stores are better. And since we require more from the drug store — Try it. Possibly it's not so bad, after all. (*Goes up and down the room several times, his hands in his trousers pockets. Half absent-minded.*) Yes, the concerts. (*Opens the wings of the glass door.*) Air! Ah! (*Breathes deeply, his coat turned back, his thumbs in the armpits*

of his vest.) There is a cool breeze from the garden. Yes, dear, what a fellow I am. What a papa! Wasn't that an idea for you to rent out here — these quarters?

Isolde.— Yes, only the bathroom is too small.

Ritter.— Why, we surely don't bathe often.

Isolde.— You.

Ritter.— Why, I am not so dirty that I must always be standing in the water. Dirty. I am never dirty. To-day I have already washed my hands twice. After dinner with warm water.

Isolde (*smiling in a forced manner*).— Great! Then surely the world will come to an end soon. I don't believe it.

Ritter (*walks up to her and extends his hands*).— Please — white as snow. Just smell.

Isolde (*without really looking, continually endeavoring to appear natural*). — Gray. You may wash *them* once more.

Ritter (*looks at his hands*).— Once more? Three times? No. Now they are to wait until to-morrow. Maybe I shall still clean my nails — for your sake. (*Takes out his penknife and cleans his nails with the smallest blade.*)

Isolde (*nervously moving back and forth in the chair, and suffering from slight chills*).— I — I feel— a draft.

Ritter (*astonished*).— Draft? Well, how so? Why, where?

Isolde (*stubbornly*).— I feel a draft.

Ritter (*closing the door again, patiently*).— If you think so — but I don't see. On my way back I was at Carl's. In his new quarters. He was not at home. I wrote him a note. Asked him to come down awhile this evening.

Isolde.— To-day — just to-day.

Ritter.— Why, he comes almost every day.

Anna (*comes through the door from the corridor and goes into* ISOLDE'S *bedroom.*) Evenin', Mr. Ritter.

Ritter (*without looking around*).— Evening. (*To* ISOLDE.) And since he has not been here this afternoon — I didn't invite him for my sake.

Isolde.— Dull, that's what he is. Stupid.

Ritter.— Stupid, stupid, stupid! Carl isn't so stupid at all! You chat with him quite nicely.

Isolde.— Sometimes, but under orders — to *have* to!

Ritter.— Isolde, that is affectation. Have to. Why, you never have to. And Carl — if he is not like a brother! Nonsense.

Anna (*opens the door halfway*).— Miss ——

Isolde.— Yes. (*To* RITTER.) Papa, now you must not be angry. I am going to bed. (*Gets up with difficulty.*)

Ritter.— Now?

Isolde.— I don't know. I believe — I — I am tired.

Ritter.— Bonnie, there is something the matter with you — tired — and at first no light. (*Almost with a cry.*) Your eyes?

(ISOLDE *does not answer at once.*)

Ritter (*with terrible anxiety*).— Bonnie — your eyes?

Isolde.— O papa, if you are so excited ——

Ritter.— I am not excited, not at all. Tell me, my child. I am really not excited — inflammation? Again?

Isolde.— Only a bit. I am suffering no pain at all — none at all.

Ritter (*sad and incredulous*).— You are fibbing to me — why, I see that.

Isolde.— No, papa, really, it is so slight, and it will be over very promptly — to-morrow.

Ritter (*is silent, stands a little bowed, then gently, with more suppressed voice than before*).— My poor, poor, poor child. Has Berger been —— (*Strokes her head gently.*)

Isolde.— Yes, the porter.

Ritter.— Can't I do something for you? Get something? From the drug store.

Isolde.— No. Atropine I have. I shall lie down.

Ritter (*puts his arm around her waist and leads her very slowly in the direction of her bedroom*).— Bonnie, my precious dear, don't be angry. I don't want to torture you with questions, but simply tell me yes or no. Is it in the iris? Or in the cornea? Is it dangerous?

Isolde.— I don't know — possibly.

Ritter.— If there are only no new growths. Do you think so?

Isolde.— O papa, you are all terrible! Now I am expected to know that! Growths — yes — no. I don't know.

Ritter (*frightened*).— Don't become excited — only don't become excited. Pardon me. You know I am so afraid. Be good now, my child.

Isolde (*stops, and sinks into his arms*).— My poor little pap. It makes no difference to me. I've grown accustomed to it.

Ritter (*bites his lips*).— Fine habit! If *I* only had it.

Isolde (*speaking with an attempt to smile*).— You stupid papa, you would scream! Such a lackadaisical creature as you!

Ritter.— Then why don't you scream too! Kick! Fuss and fume!

Isolde.— I cannot scream. (*Steps into the bedroom.*)

Ritter.— When you are in bed I will come to you. (*Shuts the door after her. Comes forward a few steps, passes the fingers of both hands through his hair, sighs deeply. Lights a candle on the desk and picks up a score. Reflects, lays it down again, goes to the door of the corridor and presses the electric*

bell at the side. With his hands at his back, he walks up and down restlessly, stopping and listening again and again at the door of the bedroom.)

Babine (comes in, sturdy woman of fifty-eight, with a white, closely tufted hood, colored blouse, and large white apron).— Good evenin'——

Ritter (interrupting).— When did the porter go away?

Babine.— Quarter hour, mebbe.

Ritter (looks at his watch, calculating).— Half-past seven — a quarter of eight. *(Puts his watch back into his pocket, sighing.)* What are we to have this evening?

Babine.— Young goose with rice. Very good, too.

Ritter (not loud, but with angry excitement, gruffly).— Are you crazy? Such indigestible stuff? And at a time when Miss Isolde is in bed?

Babine.— Fixed it this noon and didn't know ——

Ritter.— I have told you a hundred times, I want light foods in the evening, foods easily digested. One can talk himself to death. These women, these women!

Babine.— Jest wot I thought ——

Ritter.— You are not to think. Nothing but idiotic stuff comes about anyhow when you do.

Babine.— Hev so much a-doin' in my head ——

Ritter.— Shoe polish you have in your head! Something else must be provided for Isolde.

Babine.— Now, Mr. Ritter, jest be good agin, and I'll fry some chicken fur Mr. Ritter.

Ritter (already pacified again).— Well, I'll eat your darned young goose, in God's name. *(Goes to the glass door, opens it again, and goes out on the steps.)*

(ANNA *comes out of the bedroom.)*

Babine (to her, pointing to the bedroom).— Is it bad? Very? Mister Ritter's awfully cross.

Anna.— Is he scolding?

Babine.— Yep, idiotic shoe polish, and then he was all right agin right off. Oh, gracious goodness, I'd let 'im scold me the whole day — he's a powerful good man, he is. *(She goes. Door bell rings outside.)* I'll open it, never you mind. *(Off.)*

(ANNA *goes to* RITTER.)

Ritter (hears her, turns around and comes into the room hastily).— Am I to go in?

Anna.— Mr. Ritter's asked t' wait. Miss Ritter will ring in a little bit.

Ritter.— Has she everything? The chamois pillow? Handkerchiefs? Nothing missing?

Anna.— Nuthin' missin'.

Ritter (*looking at his watch again*).— The devil take these long distances.

(ANNA *opens the corridor door and runs into* CARL, *who enters.*)

Carl (*medium height, stocky, with ungainly walk and swaying hips. Frank face, large mouth, dreamy eyes. Smooth hair parted at the side, very thin mustache, well but not at all elegantly dressed. Deep voice, deliberate in speech*).— Good evening, Mr. Ritter.

Ritter (*goes to meet him*).— Yes, yes, dear boy, now I have hustled you out here in vain — unfortunately — iritis again.

Carl.— She has gone to bed? Babine was telling me. Is it serious?

Ritter.— Nothing at all do I know. Berger hasn't been here. It's not to be endured, till such a doctor comes. And I dare not ask her. That agitates her. Makes her nervous. A fellow feels like fighting. But do sit down — sit down. Like fighting.

Carl (*sits down slowly in an armchair, with his feet wide apart, swallows spasmodically several times, as if he wished to say something, licks his lips several times*).— So! ! ! (*Pause.*)

Ritter.— Well — something else. What are you doing? Why, you have moved away from your cobbler? Why?

Carl.— Hmmm. The room was pretty and very cheap — thirty marks, including coffee for breakfast — but I always had to pass through the bedroom of my landlord and landlady. During the day it was all right enough, but in the evening, the cobbler's madame as a pigtailed Venus in her sleeping jacket — hmmm.

Ritter (*smiling in a way*).— A dissonance — when you have been studying Raphaelite Madonnas all day.

Carl.— And in addition — company in bed.

Ritter (*comically feigning fright*).— The sleeping jacket!

Carl.— For God's sake, not that bad — bedbugs.

Ritter (*shakes himself*).— Whew! Horrible! I supposed they were only to be found in Austria.

Carl.— Every night a soirée and a ball on my person. The whole aristocracy of bedbugdom. And I am no society man at all. It became too taxing for me. I took leave.

Ritter.— And the cobbler and his wife?

Carl.— Follow me with tears. Say they had never had such a respectable young ma ——

Ritter (*has stepped to* ISOLDE'S *door listening. Turns away again*).— Nothing. I thought she had rung the bell.

Carl.— I should just like to know what the doctor will have to say — or I should not ——

Ritter.— Dear fellow, you are doing me a very great favor. One gets

entirely balled up when one is alone. Just at such times, and I am alone so much. You will dine with me — if you can stand young goose. Goose for supper. A notion of Babine's. Such servant girl intelligence!

Carl (*sucking his lips*).— Babine, Mr. Ritter. Babine cooks artistically! Excellent school! Works of art! Her whipped cream — ! After my everlasting boarding-house hash.

Ritter.— Yes. The Bohemians all cook well. But the scandalous German. I am angered anew every day. The younger one will never learn it, either. And their native tongue they have forgotten. Also to each other they speak this gibberish. After all they are only half human — these Slavs.

Carl (*ironically*).— The race of the future.

Ritter.— God save me from that future! (*Listens at the door again, goes away again.*) Everything all right at your home? Your mother and sister?

Carl.— Are jolly. Are already glad that I am coming during my vacation.

Ritter.— They write often — your people?

Carl.— Every day.

Ritter.— And you?

Carl.— Also. A short time ago a letter was lost. Mother telegraphed immediately.

Ritter (*smiling and shaking his head*).— These women — pampering of the emotions. (*Absent minded, since he listens repeatedly at* ISOLDE'S *door.*) So this summer you are going to the mountains together?

Carl.— No. Through the Netherlands. I am to get familiar with the museums.

Ritter.— From this place one can take such fine excursions. From two to three hours and one is in the midst of them — the mountains.

Carl.— If you were to care to, some time ——

Ritter.— O Carl — you see, of course, I cannot get away from home an hour, without — do you suppose I am being pent up calmly? I'd like to well enough. You — a couple of your companions ——

Carl (*shrugs his shoulders*).— They! Well, really, I have no companions.

Ritter (*playing piano with the five fingers of his right hand on the palm of his left hand*).— Carl! Carl! Surely among the thousand fellow students you must have found some ——

Carl.— No. All of them fail to understand me.

Ritter (*draws up his eyebrows*).— So! (*Looks at the picture of Beethoven.*) Poor Beethoven.

Carl.— I am entirely swamped im pessimism.

Ritter.— And because of pessimism — you cut ——

Carl.— My classes.

Ritter.— But you do not cut the tavern, you ——

Carl.— Mr. Ritter, I cut the tavern oftener than my classes.

Ritter.— My boy! I suppose you are trying ——

Carl (*laughing*).—To steal a march on you? (*With a sudden seriousness.*) I am an unhappy creature. I haven't the stuff in me to be a real student.

Ritter.— Well, well, well. Your father was. A real one. And with this close resemblance — let me look at you. That's just the way he looked. Even down to the little tags of a mustache.

Carl.— Upon my word, I am not. I can't drink very much, smoking is also only so so, and the bawling and quarreling suit me least of all.

Ritter.— Do you know? You were at home too long. In the little city with your mother and sister. And so a kind of girlish idealism develops.

Carl.— I can take nothing lightly. Nothing at all can I take lightly. The boorishness of the other fellows — and the nasty things ——

Ritter (*sways his head back and forth*).— Hm — didn't a certain man — Goethe — one must always have the taste of his years.

Carl.— Then I am too old for my companions.

Ritter.— Or — too young. You do not know at all how young you are. (*Going to and fro again, his hands behind his back.*) I must not disclose anything in regard to this relapse to my mother.

Carl.— You have good reports?

Ritter.— Quite satisfactory. An aged woman — of course she has things to complain of.

Carl.— How long have you been here now?

Ritter.— It will soon be half a year. You came exactly four weeks later.

Carl.— Don't you miss Vienna?

Ritter.— Not Vienna. Activity. Conducting. And here for several years there has been a current opposed to Wagner. The intellectual atmosphere is not — but if Isolde gets along well, I will even manage to live in America.

Carl.— Do you imagine that to be so terrible?

Ritter.— Oh! This musical dilettanteism. They manufacture music as they would shoes. These people have no inner ear. Nothing but cold intellectuals. Music requires feeling, imagination. But when mere reason begins to imagine — what is the upshot? Caricature.

Carl.— But the inventions — they are — stupendous.

Ritter (*taking out his watch again*).— Of what use are their inventions to

me? Eight o'clock. It can drive a person mad — this waiting. I must have telephone connections with the clinic put in. Then the sending will be eliminated and ——

Anna (*comes through the corridor door visibly perplexed*).— Mistur Ritter, Anton's come and brung with 'im ——

Ritter (*starts to go out through the door*).— The professor ——

Anna.— No. Lady.

Ritter.— What?

Carl (*at the same time*).— Whew!

Anna.— Lady sez she's doctor.

Ritter.— Stupidity! (*To* CARL.) Do you understand?

Carl.— Nnn. Or — now what in the world — occurs to me ——

Ritter.— At any rate, ask the woman to come in.

(ANNA *off.*)

Carl.— Of course I've heard something jingled about—Gregers—he is a medical student — he was telling, may have been two weeks ago, that a woman is one of Berger's assistants.

Ritter.— But that he would send me such a person ——

(ANNA *opens the door, has* SABINE *enter.*)

Sabine (*is of medium stature, slender, not lean. Slender, white face, no suggestion of unhealthy pallor. Small, firmly set mouth. Very light, large, and quiet eyes. She wears a light-gray summer dress. Plain skirt, shirt-waist with turn-down collar, which leaves the neck exposed. Broad belt of black silk without a bow. Black straw hat with a border of openwork, trimmed with black tulle and black ribbon. Her dress is in accordance with the style, but not overdone. Very good gloves of Danish leather. Her voice is clear and soft. Few gestures. To* RITTER, *who bows in an embarrassed manner, to which she responds with a light, unconstrained nod*).— Mr. Ritter?

(CARL *retreats discreetly to the desk and turns the leaves of a book lying there.*)

Ritter.— Yes — with whom have I ——

Sabine.— My name is Graef. I am an assistant in the clinic of Professor Berger. Have been for three weeks.

Ritter.— The professor is not coming?

Sabine.— He had to leave the city suddenly this morning. A serious illness in his family ——

Ritter.— And —— (*Stops.*)

Sabine.— The — other assistants? The two gentlemen are busy this evening. (*Without the slightest irony.*) Banquet. I have taken charge for the night. And since your messenger was urgent ——

Ritter (*has become somewhat composed*).— Excuse — excuse my perplexity.

Sabine (*very natural throughout, without the slightest intention at irony*).— Of course — it is justified — by the circumstances.

(CARL, *who has listened to the two casually, looks up surprised, and begins to pay attention to* SABINE.)

Ritter.— Please, if you will take a seat.

Sabine.— Thank you. (*Sits down, unbuttons her gloves.*)

Ritter.— Kindly permit me to tell my daughter — she might be fri — be taken too much by surprise.

Sabine.— I request you to do so.

(RITTER *goes to* ISOLDE's *door, knocks gently and enters on tiptoe. A short pause.* SABINE *takes off her hat. Smoothly combed, parted black hair, twisted into an English knot in back.*)

Carl (*approaches*).— Mr. Ritter, in the excitement, neglected to introduce me. Permit me —(*bows*) my name is Curtius.

(SABINE *inclines her head a little, is silent.*)

Carl.— May I ask whether you are a relative of the distinguished oculist, Dr. Graefe?

Sabine.— No. My name is Graef. Without the *e.*

Carl.— Do you intend to stay here for some time?

Sabine.— I do not know at present. I really intended to go to Berlin.

Carl.— You are a North German?

Sabine.— By birth. But I have been away for a long time.

Carl.— Abroad?

Sabine.— Yes. Most recently in Paris.

Carl.— Oh — do the conditions here suit you then?

Sabine (*calm, but short*).— The clinic is good. I am occupied. That suffices for me.

(CARL *feels that he has been awkward, bites his lips and is silent. Pause.*)

Sabine (*notices his embarrassment, somewhat friendlier*).— You are — studying?

Carl.— Yes. The history of art. Third semester.

Sabine.— I suppose you are related to Mr. Ritter?

Carl.— No. He was a friend of my father's. And Isolde was at our house for a summer when she was a child.

Sabine.— Isolde — his daughter?

Carl.— Yes.

Sabine.— The only child — or —— (*Pauses as if she recollected something, laughs gently and blushes.*)

Carl (*surprised*).— Miss Graef ——

Sabine (*frankly and cordially, but not lively*).— A moment ago I was put out because you asked me several questions. I don't like to let myself be quizzed. Now I have done just that with you. Because it is a matter of circumstances. Pardon me.

Ritter (*comes, leaves the door a trifle open, dim shaft of light through the opening*).— Will you please ——

Sabine (*rises, goes to the door, stops a moment*).— May I ask for a lamp without a shade, for the examination? One that is not — too high.

Ritter.— One of that description is in the room. I shall light it at once. (*Follows* SABINE *in. Through the half-open door one sees it become lighter.* RITTER *comes back, closes the door behind him.*) Now do tell me! Did she have anything to say — to you?

Carl.— Yes.

Ritter.— Stuff?

Carl.— No.

Ritter.— What kind of an impression does she make?

Carl.— To judge by a snapshot — well, she isn't stupid.

Ritter.— But a woman. How can such a petticoat have sense? Thimble brains at best.

Carl.— Strangely reticent for a woman who has studied. Her laughter shows a certain refinement. A certain refinement. And by their laughter I judge women.

Ritter (*wools his hair*).— A balled up mess!

Carl.— I suppose Isolde was stunned?

Ritter.— Not at all, strange to say. I told her that I should see to it, that Miss — Miss — well, whatever her name is — should be disposed of. No, I'll try it. If she tells me to do something stupid, I'll not do it.

Carl.— Surely Berger would not take an assistant who knows nothing. The responsibility is on his shoulders. Why, he would be an ass raised to the fourth power.

Ritter.— Dear boy! The great gentlemen — and especially the great physicians! They hang the little fry and the big ones are acquitted. A person is at their mercy. Physicians and vocal teachers — the same humbug.

Carl.— Aren't you going in? You are surely not allowing me to interfere.

Ritter.— Not in the least. Isolde never permits me to be present during an examination. She has always spoken to the physicians alone and ——

Sabine (*opens the door halfway, speaking back into the room*).— I am coming back directly.

Ritter (*to* CARL, *at the same time*).— Now you see! Already over! Fine examination.

Sabine (*comes in, her face does not show the slightest change*).— I shall write a prescription. Please have it filled at once. Is the drug store far away?

Ritter.— Next door.

Sabine (*goes to the desk*).— May I write here?

Ritter.— Certainly; but the candle ——

Sabine.— Is sufficient. (*Has sat down, tears an oblong prescription blank out of her notebook, writes quickly and with assurance.*)

Ritter (*runs to* ISOLDE'S *door, speaking to her with suppressed voice*).— Bonnie, how are you, my child?

Isolde (*with faint voice*).— Thanks — well.

(SABINE *has heard it, looks at him surprised for moment, lowers her head with a sad expression and continues to write hastily.*)

Ritter.— Carl is here. May he come in to you for a moment afterwards?

Sabine (*looking up*).— Pardon me. Miss Ritter is in need of the greatest possible quiet. She must receive no one to-day. Please do not even speak to her now. It taxes her.

Ritter (*intimidated, slips over to* CARL, *who stands near the door of the corridor*).— I am almost at the point of not attempting anything. What I do is wrong. My intentions certainly are good. (*He presses the button.*)

Sabine (*peruses the prescription which she has written, brings down the pen again*).— For Miss Isolde (*over her shoulder to* RITTER) Ritter — with a double *t*?

Ritter.— Yes.

(SABINE *quickly finishes writing.* RITTER *and* CARL *speak softly.*)

(ANNA *comes in.* RITTER *motions for her to wait.*)

Sabine (*has risen and gives the prescription to* RITTER, *who advances a few steps toward her*).— Urgent. I have noted that. When the medicine is here, you will please call me. (*Goes into* ISOLDE'S *room.*)

Ritter (*gives* ANNA *the prescription*).— Hurry up! Hurry up! Quickly!

(ANNA *off.*)

Carl (*pointing to the bedroom*).— Please — pardon me — have the kindness — and yet she fairly commands — she *has* energy.

Ritter.— Female energy. Inartistic, spontaneous. Not the energy of deliberation. (*Goes to the sewing table and pours out a glass of wine.*) Please, Carl. (*Presents a plate of cakes to him.*) And here. Why, your stomach must fairly be growling.

Carl (*lifts the glass in the direction of the door*).— Here's to improvement! (*Drinks.*) Aren't you going to join in?

Ritter.— I can't. Moreover, she surely has a fine alto voice. Did you hear?

Carl.— She — and sing? I believe she has no songs.

Ritter.— I don't know. To judge by her speech, there is nothing unmusical about her. A certain resonant piano — as is characteristic of alto voices.

Carl.— She's terribly calm. Hardly a motion. As if her joints were glued. Shouldn't desire her for a dancing dummy.

Ritter.— After all better than the fluttering kind of disposition. When one is accustomed to the Vienna rag tags.

Carl.— Are you after the poor Austrians again? Why you yourself——

Ritter.— Unfortunately. But I have broken myself of it — of my nativity. That isn't the point.

Carl.— And do you like the South Germans?

Ritter.— Beer drinkers.

Carl.— So the North Germans? ——

Ritter.— How? The martial strutters?

Carl.— Well, whom then?

Ritter.— No one. I am a misanthrope. The world is too modern for me.

Anna (*comes breathlessly, a little bottle wrapped in green paper and the prescription in an envelope*).— Medicine 's done.

(RITTER *takes the bottle and envelope, knocks at* ISOLDE'S *door and hands the bottle in.*)

Carl (*to* ANNA).— So quickly?

Anna.— Druggist know me purty good. We 'uns eat much medicine. (*Off.*)

Ritter (*comes forward, takes the prescription out of the envelope*).— I must certainly look at it.

Carl (*also looks at the prescription*).— At least she doesn't scribble, as most of them do.

Ritter (*reads*).— Eserine sulf. 0,1. Aqu. dist. 10,0. One drop to be dropped into the left eye four times a day. (*Stops.*) Eserine? What new affair is that? Why Isolde has never had that. Atropine, cocaine, but eserine — surely she hasn't suddenly contracted an entirely new disease.

Carl (*also nonplussed, shakes his head*).— I wonder whether her pen may have slipped for her?

Sabine (*comes out of the bedroom. She closes the door gently and carefully. In her left hand she carries the lamp, which* RITTER *takes out of her*

hand courteously and places on the table).— You will permit me to stay awhile. A few moments. I should like to await the effect of the eserine. And a few questions — if you have time.

Carl (*quickly to* RITTER).— I will go and render the garden unsafe. Imbibe a bit of moonshine ——

Ritter (*nods to him.* CARL *off down the steps.* RITTER *offers* SABINE *a chair*).— Mademoiselle. (*Sits down opposite to her.*)

Sabine (*very unostentatiously*).— Miss Graef, if you please.

Ritter (*inclines his head slightly*).— How you — (*Relapsing into anxiety and excitement.*) And the eye? How long will it last? Has she severe pain? Is her condition dangerous? Surely you will tell me the truth?

Sabine.— Precarious.

Ritter (*leans back, supports his head on his hands, very pale, but with a touching calmness*).— An intense inflammation in the iris?

Sabine.— No iritis.

Ritter.— But?

Sabine.— An increase of the interocular pressure. Secondary glaucoma.

Ritter (*looks at her blankly*).— Pardon me, what is that?

Sabine.— I have not been able to undertake a thorough examination to-day. With the intense irritation of the eye I should have tortured the patient — and to no purpose. The refractive media are very clouded.

Ritter.— The cornea.

Sabine (*with half a smile*).— The horny membrane — quite right. I think by to-morrow the pressure ——

Ritter (*interrupting, somewhat relieved*).— So we can count upon improvement — soon?

Sabine.— It must come.

Ritter.— And the attack will have done no harm ——

Sabine (*raises her shoulders a bit*).— That — possibly a slight decrease of the field of vision, but I hope, with the youthful flexibility of the vascular walls — you know that the eye has suffered many changes in all its parts on account of the continued inflammation. Especially the synechia. I was going to say ——

Ritter.— Quite right, I know the meaning of synechia. They are morbid adhesions of the iris.

Sabine (*takes out her notebook*).—I have had the patient relate the course of the illness to me as briefly as possible. Possibly you can remember some things to be corrected.

(RITTER *sits up a bit, looking at* SABINE *with intense, reflecting attention.*)

Sabine (*reads from her notebook in a businesslike manner*).— First ailment of the left eye four years ago.

Ritter.— Yes, on the fourteenth of June. I just wanted to attend the meeting of vocal musical artists ——

Sabine (*does not allow herself to be interrupted, heads him off and continues*).— Asserted itself in a slight decrease of vision. No pain, no external change.

Ritter.— Yes, there was — a bit — a bit dim, as compared with the right one, the sound one. Oh, she had such beautiful eyes!

Sabine.— Half a year later intense acute inflammation. Continued chronic irritation. Necessitated the daily use of atropine. In spite of that, intensified recurrence of the inflammation. Dim spots remained in the cornea, numerous adhesions, the vision deteriorated more and more. In the right eye ——

Ritter.— Because we did not have enough trouble with the other one!

Sabine.— In the right eye a sympathetic inflammation two years ago. Passed over quickly and easily. Vision scarcely affected.

Ritter.— Not at all, not at all. Isolde said that she could even read the finest print in the testing cards of the physicians, with the right eye.

Sabine (*astonished*).— Brilliant type? *That* she —— (*Recollects, changing the subject.*) An accurate examination will — for the present that is secondary. You have had very many physicians——

Ritter.— All of them Vienna authorities. It did no good.

Sabine (*calmly*).— That is in the nature of the disease. And have tried very many remedies.

Ritter (*sighing*).— That too. A veritable torment. And how gruff old Stellwag was in addition to all of it.

Sabine.— Finally the most intensive treatment: Hypodermic injections of mercury. (*Looking up from her notebook.*) Have you a prescription of that period?

Ritter.— No. The doctor did not want to give us one. He always brought the mercury along. I do not know why.

Sabine (*looking at him suspiciously and astonished*).— You do not know why? You need not make a secret of it to me. I know.

Ritter (*half nonplussed, half intimidated*).— I really do not know.

Sabine (*bites her lips, her eyebrows are raised a little. Continuing more coldly than before*).— Do you remember whether your daughter really had twenty-two injections successively. The number is unusual. Is there no mistake about it?

Ritter (*getting up hastily and going toward the table*).— No. No. Exactly so. I shall immediately — in my diary —— (*Takes a medium-sized book in dark brown binding out of the middle drawer, and turns the leaves.*) Why, where have I, why, where is — here: the fourth of October ——

Sabine.— Last year?

Ritter.— The last. (*Reads.*) This was the very important day on which Isolde had her last injection, the twenty-second. As a reward —— (*Stops.*) Well, yes.

Sabine.— And at that time the greatest improvement set in.

Ritter.— In the vision — left eye. The headlines, "New Free Press," she could read again.

Sabine.— Did you change your residence to this place on account of your daughter?

Ritter.— Yes. Vienna is no climate at all for eye patients. The everlasting wind and lime dust. Also social and family affairs which we tried to escape. And above all the reputation of Professor Berger.

Sabine.— Why did you not put your daughter into the clinic?

Ritter (*with a superior and somewhat disdainful tone of voice*).— N-no. Expose my child to the caprice and whims of these nurses. That is against my principles. She would have died of anxiety. My child! The professor was in favor of abandoning all remedies.

Sabine.— After all had failed. And his prognosis?

Ritter.— Is pretty favorable. (*Correcting himself in a way.*) Well, yes, favorable. What one might call favorable under the circumstances. The inflammation would gradually subside, and the vision improve. Normal it cannot become again, but!! Why, we are satisfied with so little. Quiet! Rest! After four years! Finally!

Sabine (*scrutinizing*).— The environment always shares in the suffering ——

Ritter.— I? What of me? But she is to have a little of life still. I am through with the affair. But my child — when such a young life is ruined on one's hands it's hard.

Sabine.— What did they indicate to you as the underlying cause of the illness?

Ritter.— Hodgepodge. Each one something different. Cold, anemia, tuberculosis of the eye ——

Sabine.— Your daughter has not had rheumatism of the joints?

Ritter.— No sign of it.

Sabine.— Has no one told you — why — why the specific mercury was used so energetically?

Ritter.— I have an idea — mercury is a common remedy for diseases of the eye.

Sabine.— Certainly. But in the case of your daughter it was used to an *extent* — it is customary to treat patients with iritis in that manner only when it is due to general diseases.

Ritter.— Isolde has always been sound as a dollar.

Sabine.— Has your daughter ever been examined by a gynecologist?

Ritter.— Yes. In Vienna.

Sabine.— At whose suggestion?

Ritter.— The young man — Professor Fuchs. The young fellows are always so impetuous.

Sabine.— And the result? Do you know anything about it?

Ritter (*takes his diary again and turns the leaves*).—Here is the letter ——

Sabine.— Please. (*Takes it, reads in an undertone.*) 'Dear Colleague, have examined Miss Ritter, absolutely negative result — from this point of view the illness is not to be explained,' etc., etc. Where did you get this letter?

Ritter.— Fuchs thought it was an important document. I should save it.

Sabine.— And all that did not strike you?

Ritter (*with wide-open eyes*).— No.

Sabine (*involuntarily*).— But that is scarcely pos —— (*Breaks off, after a short reflection.*) Your eyes are all right? (*During the following sentences she takes a leather case out of her satchel, opens it, takes out an ophthalmoscope and a magnifying glass and cleans both with a piece of chamois skin.*)

Ritter.— My vision is good — yes. Only very fine notes are a little taxing for me now, and especially the French scores are so poorly printed. After I had conducted the 'Damnation' my eyes burned like fire.

Sabine.— Will you sit opposite me — so — and move up closely — quite closely?

(RITTER *moves up so closely that his knees touch hers. The two sit sidewise before the table.*)

Sabine (*gets up to turn down the hanging lamp so that the stand lamp furnishes all of the illumination. After she has carefully wiped off her fingers with her handkerchief, she takes the magnifying glass*).— Please look at me. (*After she has looked at the one and then at the other eye, without touching them, she turns the light upon them through the magnifying glass, which she holds sidewise. All is done quickly and with assurance.*) Does the light hurt you?

Ritter.— Unpleasant — a bit.

Sabine (*lowers the magnifying glass*).— You may rest a moment.

Ritter.— Oh, please — it is not that bad.

Sabine (*changes the lamp so it comes to stand a little behind* RITTER, *takes the ophthalmoscope into her right hand, while she carefully pulls apart the lids of one eye with two fingers*).— Permit me — your lids are a trifle heavy — please look up — down — to the right — to the left — at my nose.

(RITTER *involuntarily begins to laugh.* SABINE *lowers the mirror.*)

Ritter (*very much embarrassed*).— Oh, pardon me!

Sabine (*also a little brightened, cordially*).— I cannot release you from looking at my nose.

Ritter (*forces himself to be serious*).— Oh, with pleasure!

Sabine.— Only a second. (*Raises the ophthalmoscope again, and looks at the other eye in a similar manner.*) Up — down — right — left — in the middle. Thank you. (*Puts the instruments back into the case and turns up the hanging lamp.*) Your eyes are normal. I have a few more questions. Answer them as briefly as possible.

Ritter.— Objectively and to the point.

Sabine.— And frankly.

Ritter (*moves back slightly. Not offended, but with reserved seriousness*).— I shall.

Sabine (*notes* RITTER'S *answers in her notebook. She writes shorthand, as indicated by the movements of her hand*).— Do you know whether serious eye troubles have occurred in your family or the family of your wife?

Ritter.— Not in my family. My father was a bit near-sighted.

Sabine.— Did your father have a calling that was hard on the eyes?

Ritter.— No. He was a piano builder, owner of the Ritter Piano Factory in Vienna. And my mother does not even require glasses to this day. The family of my wife — a regular race of robber barons. All of them of gigantic strength.

Sabine.— No pulmonary or heart diseases?

Ritter.— I lost my wife — shall I speak a little slower — on account of your writing?

Sabine.— Thank you. I write shorthand. Your wife died of ——

Ritter.— Five years ago of an acute inflammation of the lungs.

Sabine.— Her lungs were already affected before?

Ritter.— She took cold at a ball — a very severe cold — and in a week —— (*He grows silent and looks at the floor.*)

Sabine.— You married at the age of ——

Ritter (*reflects*).— Now I really do not know — at the age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight. I believe twenty-seven — when the 'Mastersingers' was presented for the first time.

Sabine.— Your wife was ——

Ritter.— Twenty years old.

Sabine.— Your daughter was born ——

Ritter.— After a year and a half.

Sabine.— No miscarriage before?

Ritter (*blushing*).— No.

Sabine.— Your wife was well — nothing unusual during her pregnancy?

Ritter (*blushing more and more, and with increasing embarrassment*).— Yes — no, I meant to say.

Sabine.— The delivery?

Ritter.— Was difficult.

Sabine.— With forceps?

Ritter.— No.

Sabine.— Your wife nursed the child herself?

Ritter.— No. That is not the fashion in Vienna. We had a wet-nurse. A Slav.

Sabine.— Was she healthy?

Ritter.— The family physician said yes — very.

Sabine.— Weren't the corners of the child's mouth sore during the first year? Did it suffer from eruptions? Ulcers about the gums?

Ritter.— That I cannot say. At that time I was almost always on concert tours. My wife accompanied me.

Sabine.— The child was turned over to the servants?

Ritter.— What do you imagine! With my parents.

Sabine.— There were no more children?

Ritter.— No. My wife was very glad.

Sabine.— When did puberty set in with your daughter?

Ritter (*red as fire*).— I believe — at — at the age of fourteen.

Sabine.— Was she anemic?

Ritter.— Never — at all.

Sabine.— Did she strain her eyes? Evenings — with fancy work?

Ritter.— Not that, either. She worked much at drawing, later she painted — porcelain and pastelle — a high degree of talent. (*Points to the picture.*) By her.

Sabine (*looks up*).— Portrait of herself? In ball costume? She attended many balls and social functions?

Ritter.— My wife introduced her rather early into society. It was so fine. They looked like two sisters.

Sabine.— One moment. (*Reads over her notes rapidly, murmuring.*) Nothing, nothing at all. Only — (*looks at him penetratingly again.*) You have never had a rather serious physical ailment?

Ritter.— No.

Sabine (*looks into her notebook*).— You married at — twenty-seven. You probably lived like all young people before ——

Ritter (*blushing deeply, interrupts her angrily*).— Beg pardon. I was engaged to my wife five years.

Sabine.— An engagement of that duration is usually not a hindrance.

Ritter (*jumps up*).— See here — you have fine views.

Sabine.— I have no views. Only experience.

Ritter (*angry, however endeavoring to control himself*).— You have a right to ask me whatever is within the scope of the physician. But there are things that one must regard as secret.

Sabine.— There are things that must be robbed of their secrecy and mystery. That constitutes their danger.

Ritter.— I cannot at all see why that should come up for discussion between us. Senseless! (*Remains standing before her.*) Why, doesn't it embarrass you?

Sabine.— You do not understand me or do not want to understand me.

Ritter (*slapping his hands together helplessly*).— In the deuce's name, I don't understand you.

Sabine.— You are to tell me whether the possibility of a specific taint on the paternal side is out of the question.

Ritter.— You suppose, do you, that I know what specific taint means?

Sabine (*is silent a moment, then calmly as during all the preceding sentences*).— Lues.

Ritter (*his hands in his trousers pockets, still looks at her blankly. Repeats indifferently, slowly remembering the sound of the word*).— What? (*Starts up, raising both hands to his brow, enraged.*) Are you crazy? (*Breaking out in angry laughter.*) Possibly you will even consider me capable of having stolen silver spoons.

Sabine (*unswervingly*).— So it is not?

Ritter.— Ridiculous! Simply ridiculous! And you ought to have known, that with a person of culture ——

Sabine (*smiling somewhat disdainfully*).— Oh! the people of culture ——

Ritter.— Well, and the moral bases ——

Sabine (*her face becomes serious and gloomy*).— The weakest element in the spiritual and physical organism are the moral bases. Every physician knows that.

Ritter.— Then if I were you I should presume that I am lying.

Sabine (*looks at him*).— Lying. Possibly make your child blind, *that* you cannot do. Your ignorance of the illness has misled me. For that reason I was compelled to ask. You have answered. I believe you. I shall take another look. (*Goes into the bedroom.*)

Ritter (*runs his fingers through his hair, runs to the veranda door, opens it wide and calls*).— Carl!

Carl (*comes after a few moments.*)—Did she babble much more?

Ritter (*still in flaring anger*).— That's what comes of it! That's what comes of it! When women study medicine. I am certainly a decent fellow.

And such baseness. I beg of you, Carl, look at me. How do I look? Do I look like — like — it is preposterous. And here a woman stands — and she is not even old — and says a word — well!! The devil take all of the modern piggishness.

Carl.— Modern piggishness is good.

Ritter (*wipes the sweat from his brow with his handkerchief*).— Why, it must raise a fellow's bile. I sweat blood. Do you believe that one of the twenty doctors whom we had the pleasure of having made bold to ask what she asked?

Carl.— Possibly it would have been better if they had asked.

Ritter.— Not in the least. That is just a characteristic of women. They look for something irregular, extraordinary — that puffs up the little brains — but a sympathetic word for the child ——

Sabine (*returns, leaves the door open pretty wide*).— She is getting along better.

Ritter (*his face brightens up, he utters almost a cry of joy*).—Oh—less pain.

Sabine.— She will be able to sleep. Without morphine. If she should desire to eat something, only a cup of beef broth.

Ritter.— Bouillon?

Sabine.— Yes. She must not chew anything. The movements incidental to chewing might have an irritating effect. If she is thirsty, you will please put a little wine into the water for her. I do not believe that intense pain will come during the night. If — then administer one drop of eserine — one.

Ritter (*unsteadily*).— And to-morrow morning?

Sabine.— I shall send out Dr. Hoen, the first assistant.

Ritter (*is silent a moment while* SABINE *puts on her hat*).— You will not have the kindness ——

Sabine.— No. (*The bell in* ISOLDE'S *room is rung vigorously.*)

(RITTER *runs in, he is heard speaking half audibly to* ISOLDE.)

Carl.— Miss Graef, you have concluded that the ailment is serious?

Sabine.— It is a serious illness.

Carl.— Isolde *is* greatly to be pitied.

Sabine.— The father still more.

Ritter (*comes back, embarrassed*).— I am to request you — my daughter requests you — to come back to-morrow.

Sabine.— Am sorry ——

Ritter (*takes both of her hands, looks at her half imploringly, half reproachfully*). —But I beg you ——

Sabine (*overcome*).— Very well — to-morrow at eight o'clock. (*She releases her hands from his and hastily draws her gloves over her fingers.*)

Ritter.— If you will be patient a moment, I shall directly have a carriage.

Sabine.— No, I thank you. I do not need a carriage. I prefer to walk. I want to walk.

Ritter.— Why, you *can* not so late at night ——

Sabine.— Why, of course *I* can.

Carl.— It is a matter of course.

Sabine.— Please do not trouble yourself.

Carl.— I go in the same direction.

Ritter.— Yes, yes, Carl. Take care of Miss Graef. And you, poor boy, have not had anything to eat yet.

Carl.— I shall go to the restaurant later.

Sabine.— Good night, Mr. Ritter.

Carl (*shaking his hands*).— Yes indeed — a good night. I'll amble out to-morrow forenoon.

Ritter (*takes the two out before the door, immediately comes back, followed by* ANNA).— I am not going to eat — no. Remove the things. (*Steps up to* ISOLDE'S *bedroom, pushing back the doors at the right and left. The side of the bed is against the rear wall. Rococo curtains. Medicine chest with medicine bottles and a glass. Wardrobe with mirror, washstand with mirror. On the elegant toilet table draped with lace a lighted night lamp with a green globe. All furniture enameled white, with blue stripes.* ISOLDE *lies deep in the pillows, hardly visible.* RITTER *kneels down at her bed and kisses her hands, which hang down.*)

Ritter.— How are you?

Isolde (*gently, but with effort*).—Thank you—well. How do you like her?

Ritter.— Well!

Isolde.— Her hands are so soft.

Ritter.— Don't speak, don't speak — it will tax you.

Isolde.— Papa!

Ritter.— What, my child?

Isolde.— Do you love me?

Ritter.— Well, I should say so!

Isolde.— I mean — terribly — above all else — love only me.

Ritter.— Yes, yes! ! !

Isolde.— More than grandma?

Ritter.— Yes.

Isolde (*satisfied, turns on the other side*).— I want to sleep.

Ritter (*gets up, kisses her hands once more*).— Good night. (*Slips into the sitting-room on tiptoe, to* ANNA, *who has just finished clearing the table.*) Go to bed. Pst. (*Pours himself out a glass of wine and drinks it hurriedly. Goes to the veranda door and pushes the bolt.*)

Anna (going out with the tray).— Good night, Mr. ——

Ritter (motions to her eagerly and angrily).— Pst! ! ! *(Sits down on a chair, takes off his boots and places them before the door. Goes into his bedroom and comes back in a few seconds in his shirt sleeves, with a pillow and comforter, and clumsily arranges a place to sleep on the sofa. Unbuttoning his suspenders, he looks over to* ISOLDE *carefully once more. Walking forward he remains standing before the chair on which* SABINE *had been sitting. Sits down on the sofa, supporting his head with his hands, speaks gently to himself, keeping his eyes on* SABINE'S *chair.)* Yes.

ACT II

Bright summer afternoon. The table is moved away from the sofa into the center, and set for four persons for the afternoon coffee. Fine porcelain, silver trays with confectionery and fruit, a cut-glass vase with summer flowers.

ANNA *arranges plates, little knives, and spoons on the serving table.*

ISOLDE *has her eyeglasses on, wears a white dress with a light-blue sash, rosebuds at her belt, lies comfortably on the sofa and swings the patent leather shoe, partly removed, on the point of her foot. Beside her a poorly dressed girl, nine years old, her hair drawn away from her face and braided into a stiff pigtail in the back.*

Isolde (somewhat impatient).— No, my dear, not to-day. To-morrow your mother is to come to read to me. Tell her to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock — good by.

Child (handing over an envelope timidly).— Mamma said I should take the liberty ——

Isolde (takes it).— Well — does it amount to ten hours already? I'll give her the money to-morrow. I suppose there is no hurry. I really haven't time to-day. *(Puts the envelope into her pocket, while she fixes her eye upon the child.)* Why don't you wear your hair loose? That pigtail behind is ugly. I'll make you a present of a ribbon. To-morrow. Tell your mamma to remind me of it. Good by. *(Holds out her hand to her.)* So — you may kiss my hand. It's a good thing for little girls to get the habit of being polite.

(CHILD *kisses her hand awkwardly.*)

Isolde.— You can go through the garden — the door is open.

(CHILD *courtesies and is about to go.*)

Isolde (getting up).— Wait a moment. I want to —— *(Has stepped to the table, picks out a large piece of cake and gives it to the child.)* Here, my dear. Bite right into it. Is it good? How are you getting along with your piano

playing? I must tell papa one of these days to examine you. So Tricksie. Good by. (*The girl departs over the veranda.*)

Anna (*comes and puts a glass before each place*).— What kind 'eart the Miss is got.

Isolde.— One should always do kind things for the poor. And when a child like that looks at the cake I cannot stand that. And there is so much of it. Has the whipped cream been put on the ice properly? Did it get stiff?

Anna.— Hard as a rock.

Isolde.— Tell Babine to pour the water on the coffee slowly, very slowly. It must be fine as silk. I don't want to trip up the first time Miss Graef is with us. An ounce and a half to every cup. And be sure not to forget — boiled cream and cold cream. The cold to be in the silver creamer. If there is any cream left you may eat it.

(ANNA *off to the adjoining room.*)

Isolde (*goes around the table scrutinizing it once more, wipes the interior of several cups with the little finger of her right hand in order to see that there is no dust in them. Holds a glass toward the light, but puts it down quickly and passes her hand over her eyes*).— Ouch! (*Picks out several bonbons from the trays and goes about in the room eating them, while she hums to herself.*) 'Yes, such a man can be charming, charming indeed.' (*Opens the piano, tries to play the melody with one finger, makes mistakes, angrily runs her thumb over two octaves. Throws herself down in a lounging chair, yawning.*) Boring — horribly boring. (*Takes out a pocket mirror and makes faces at it.*) Oo — ah. (*Strikes her knees alternately with her hands.*) Appety, Ippety, Ippety, Oppety, Oppety. (*Looks at the table, her eyes rest with interest upon the bouquet. She turns her head to and fro scrutinizingly, quickly opens a drawer of the desk and takes out a sketch book. Runs to the table and rearranges the bouquet, carefully looks out through the glass door to see that no one is coming, sits down with her back toward the veranda, takes off her eyeglasses and begins to draw eagerly. Now and then she wipes her left eye with her kerchief.*)

Carl (*comes over the veranda, looks at* ISOLDE *in astonishement, rushes up and snatches the book from her hand*).— Bonnie — you monster!

(ISOLDE *jumps up with a cry and lets the pencil fall.*)

Carl (*excited*).— You deserve — a flogging ——

Isolde (*with pacified laughter*).— Do not become enraged, Don Carlos. (*Complaining.*) My lead, my lead, why where is my most beautiful lead?

Carl (*still excited*).— You are a genuine fright! Without glasses! And drawing! Will you put them right on again?

Isolde (*puts her glasses on, good humoredly humming*).— 'Slowly forward, slowly forward, that the Austrian men in arms.' (*Again peevishly.*)

My lead — why where is my lead? Under the table —— (*About to stoop.*)

Carl (*restrains her*).— You are not to stoop and let the blood rush —— I'll hunt for it. (*Kneels down clumsily and looks for the lead pencil under the table.*)

Isolde (*laughing*).— He is kneeling. Fat Carl is kneeling. Carl, your pantaloons will burst. Oh, how you look, how you look! (*She laughs immoderately.*) Now I know what to write in your album. I'll make a drawing of you as you are lying there, and write underneath — 'grow contented, happy grow, fat little pug in the paletot.'

(CARL *has found the pencil.* ISOLDE *pulls one of his arms with both hands while he gets up.*)

Isolde.— Up, up! Get up, fat pug in the paletot. That's what you will get in your album.

Carl. — An album is always on the bum. (*Gives her the pencil.*) There. And you are to desist from drawing. Now you are getting along better at last. Now by all means you insist on becoming ill again. Isn't that the case? And then you will lie on your nose again ——

Isolde (*scoffing and coquettish*).— On my little nose ——

Carl.— And a person would like to tear out his hair.

Isolde (*as before*).— 'My golden tresses'—— (*Hums the melody.*) 'Don't be angry with me, darling.'

Carl.— Why don't you stop this everlasting sing ——

Isolde.— Surely I will be allowed to give vent to my musical spirit. No; but seriously. You are a foolish boy, and the drawing doesn't hurt me at all. Just that second!

Carl.— Half a second even is too much. What serious worry you have caused me!

Isolde.— Whew! Look at him! The man reduced to a skeleton from worry! (*Extends her finger in the direction of his body.*) Except the little paunch. That grows and thrives as the lilies of the field. A lily paunch.

Carl (*blushes, goes to the desk where he puts down the sketch book*).— A little fool,— that's what you are. A selfish little fool.

Isolde (*follows him, half scoffing, half flattering*).— Carlie, good fat king Carlie — of Iceland — you were always the king of Iceland, weren't you?

Carl (*grumbles out of patience*).— M ——

Isolde.— Don't grumble into your six little hairs of a beard — moreover they have grown a millimeter — after a bit you will get some good things — a genuine Vienna stirred Gugelhupf — that is simply ravishingly delicious. I can see you lying over your plate now — and stuff — mm — both cheeks full — and then he makes regular crawfish eyes in his greed ——

Carl.— Isolde — now the digging is going to stop ——

Isolde (*puts her hand up to her nose*).— Snails stop.

Carl.— You will not stop until you have your flogging ——

Isolde (*offers her face*).— Please don't be embarrassed. A box — or — (*very coquettish*) kiss?

(CARL *makes a violent gesture as if he wanted to embrace her, however overpowered by timidity he desists and turns away depressed and blushing deeply.*)

Isolde (*half in anger, half in merriment, stamping her foot*).— Goodness, how stupid you are!

Carl (*has gained control of himself*).— I say — don't be so frank.

Isolde (*pouting, while she goes about braiding at the tips of her braids*).— When a pretty girl makes such advances to you ——

Carl (*in feigned astonishment*).— You are pretty — you?

Isolde.— Don't deceive! Why, you like me better than the whole wide, wide world.

Carl (*with exaggeration*).— You have bees in your bonnet. So far as concerns me. You flatter yourself!

Isolde.— And your poems? Tsch! (*Declaims.*) In moonlight in the still spring night your countenance appears to me. My sleep is gone, my heart grows light and turns in fervent prayer to thee. (*Speaks.*) In prayer to thee. Pretty. Very pretty. Didn't I read that somewhere? How I feel! I the heroine of poems.

Carl.— But, Isolde, you are pretty far on the wrong track. My songs are not — to you.

Isolde.— To whom then? Your hand as a pledge that you are telling the truth.

Carl (*reflects a moment, laughs and extends his hand to her*).— To — Glaucopis.

Isolde (*very much disappointed*).— Glaucopis? Why, who is she? Such a stupid name. Such a stupid thing. Copis. How ordinary!

Carl.— Yes — ordinary Pallas Athene!

Isolde.— Tut, tut, tut. Athene. It's probably a waitress.

Carl (*sits down comfortably at the table and takes a few bonbons*).— Now squirm until you have your fill, you curious Margie. It will take a long time for you to get a line on it.

Isolde (*throws herself on the sofa out of humor. A long yawn, during which she holds her hand over her mouth*).— Oh!

Carl.— How you are ohoing!

Isolde.— Stop your gibberish. You are boring — fit to kill.

Carl.— How often you have been killed to-day!

Isolde.— Didn't you hear anything about her?

Carl.— About whom?

Isolde.— About the Graef woman! Of course!

Carl.— How so, of course? I don't go out spying.

Isolde.— Don't act so important. Spying! What do you know? And I will make you a present of a Dieffenbach for a watch fob. Quickly, quickly, quickly.

Carl (*moving one thumb about the other*).— There is a very slow hurry about it.

Isolde.— Where in the world did she study medicine?

Carl.— In Zurich. Where do you suppose? At our universities no women folks are allowed.

Isolde.— Women folks! How you are imitating papa.

Carl.— In Zurich she also took her doctor's degree. *Summa cum laude.*

Isolde.— Does that mean good?

Carl.— With the highest distinction. How stupid you girls are!

Isolde.— Latin snob! The Graef woman is as clever as you are at any rate.

Carl.— A clever scamp.

Isolde.— Only I don't understand how she can always wear the same dress. Always the same. One gets so tired looking at it.

Carl.— Her behavior also always wears the same dress.

Isolde.— Strange! But she doesn't babble. I certainly know what kind of physicians I have had — above all they tell you the story of their life. She doesn't talk at all except as it concerns you. And when she touches you — those silken hands. That impressed me so on the first evening. Moreover if she does not get to talking of her medicine — socially she is as timid as any young sweet thing.

Carl.— Of the plastic arts she certainly hasn't a faint idea. I wanted to sound her a little — about Italian painting. Blockhead. Do you suppose that she has ever been at the Pinakothek? I don't believe that she can tell a Phidias from a confectioner.

Isolde.— Simply not cultured.

Anna (*opens the door of the bedroom partly, holding out a couple of little bottles filled with a red fluid*).— Miss — is that for to throw away?

Isolde (*jumping up eagerly and running to the door*).— What is striking you? Why that is to be saved.

Anna.— Well there's a new bottle of it there.

Isolde.— It's to be saved. Give me the flagon on the toilet table.

(ANNA *disappears.*)

Carl (*pointing to the two bottles which* ISOLDE *holds in her hand*).— What kind of a delicacy is that?

Isolde (*with jocular pride*).— Poison. Eserine. But it can no longer be used. It is too old. Already quite red. You know it turns red when it gets old. Like a ruby, isn't it?

Carl (*disgusted*).— Fine ruby with the skull and crossbones on it. Nasty. Do throw it away.

Isolde.— Yes indeed. I'll carry out your commands directly, sir.

(ANNA *hands a cut-glass flagon which is filled one-third with red fluid through the door.*)

Isolde (*puts it on the desk and carefully empties the two bottles into it*).— Red poison. Isn't that just as if it were taken from a tragedy. Formerly there was iris blanc in the flagon. Doesn't that give you occasion for psychological reflections, Carl?

Carl.— Philosophic!

Isolde.— Oh that is *toute meme chose.* So now I'll affix — I'll affix a tag on the phial — but what kind of a motto will I put on it — something ancient — medieval — I dote on the Middle Ages.

Carl.— But you are rather of the rococo style. Venetian filigree.

Isolde.— Isn't that true? The waist! And the Graef woman?

Carl.— Genuine Gothic — pointed arch.

Isolde (*while she takes a label out of a little box and dips her pen into the ink*).— And you?

Carl.— Baroque — wig.

Isolde.— Dense wig! Now I know. The motto. From Tristan and Isolde. 'For deepest pang, for highest woe, she gave the draught of death.' That has such a fine creepy sound, and I like anything creepy.

Carl.— Where is your happy progenitor?

Isolde (*pointing over her shoulder with her pen in the direction of* RITTER'S *room*).— In there — I believe. Don't disturb me or my hand will get away from me.

Carl (*takes a piece of cake*).— If you think that I will allow myself to be invited to an afternoon coffee and wait until midnight ——

Isolde (*writing*).— 'She — gave.' The Graef woman is not coming until five. Is it already ——?

Carl.— No. A quarter of.

Isolde.— 'Draught of death.' (*Dries what she has written with blotting paper and pastes the label on the bottle. Sees that* CARL *is eating.*) Me, too.

Carl (*lets her take a bite*).— Well, well. Aren't you ready to die yet?

Isolde (*calls*).— Anna! — Yes indeed, die. I'll do you that favor, in order that you may eat all of the cake.

(ANNA *comes out of the bedroom.*)

Isolde (*gives her the two bottles*).— These you are to throw away. And that (*gives her the flagon*) is to be put in the red plush case, the square one. The one which contains the lavender salts.

(ANNA *off.*)

Carl.— Poison and lavender salts. You have notions like a box car.

Ritter (*comes through the door of the corridor, an open letter in his hand*).— Ah! Don Carlos. *Salamaleikum.* God's greetings. How?

Carl.— Thanks — streaky.

Ritter.— What have you to say in regard to our child? How she looks? Her cheeks?

Carl.— Yes — like the cheeks of Rubens' children — almost.

Ritter.— Thank God. Thank God! Yes, Miss Graef. A competent woman. Strange. But really, she has sense. Really! (*Points to the letter in his hand.*) Letter, Bonnie, from grandma. Overjoyed of course, because you are getting along better. Wants to know whether we are not coming home by — winter.

Isolde.— Not for Venice.

Ritter.— Poor old mammie. I'm sorry for her. She has such a longing. After all — when one is almost seventy — and to be separated and alone——

Isolde (*nervously fingering her kerchief*).— I don't want to, I don't want to. (*With her kerchief she has thrown out the envelope, which* CARL *picks up and hands to her.*) Papa, give me some money. To pay for the reading. And I also need a number of things in addition. Much money.

Ritter.— My money. You are wheedling it out of me again.

Isolde.— Wheedling it out of — what an air he assumes!

Ritter.— Bonnie, to one's papa one does not refer as 'he.'

Isolde.— You are surely not a 'she.' He knows nothing about money, Carl, he, he, he.

Ritter.— I have brought *her* up well! Prize copy! I am going to write a few lines to grandma. Don't you want to a ——

Isolde.— I cannot write, my eyes ——

Ritter.— Only a greeting and kiss ——

Isolde (*stubbornly*).— No, papa, the white paper, it blinds one — no, no. That may harm me.

Ritter (*going to his room*).— Well, all right.

Isolde.— Aren't you going to put on your black coat?

Ritter.— Of course — must I not be dressed up?

Isolde.— And another tie. That one is already fringed.

Ritter.— Yes, also that. How a man is tormented! (*Off, into his room.*)

Carl.— You, with your excuses. Why did you not do him the favor?

Isolde (*puckers her lips, sways half dancing from one foot to the other*).— If I don't care to, I don't care to.

Carl.— It seems to me — you don't like your grandmother.

Isolde.— Well — so — so. I don't get along with her.

Carl.— Up to date grandchild from the 'Fliegende Blätter.'

Isolde.— Grandma is too smart for me. I don't like to have people around me who have more sense than I.

Carl.— Thanks!

Isolde.— Not at all. And grandma *is* kind too. But papa she loves above all else. My Henry, my son, my Henry — always and forever like a grind organ. I am only a kind of side dish. And so I pegged away at papa until we got away.

Carl.— Until he gave up his excellent position as concert conductor.

Isolde.— It wasn't easy for him. Not at all easy for him.

Carl.— Really, he exists solely for your sake.

Isolde.— Yes, that is proper.

Carl (*looks through the veranda door*).— Isolde — she is coming.

Isolde (*steps up to him*).— Yes, yes — the gray medicine bottle. (*Waves her hand in the direction of* Miss Graef.) *Bon jour, Bon jour* —— (*Half audibly to* Carl.) Heavens, she *isn't* at all pretty — she doesn't want to be pretty — or she doesn't think of wanting to be. I beg you, ring the bell, so the girl will bring the coffee.

(Carl *rings the bell.*)

Isolde (*advances a few steps to meet* Sabine. *Very lively, with unconscious exaggeration*).— That is good, that is dear, that is lovely of you. I am awfully glad that ——

Sabine (*entering, dressed as in the first act, her face a trifle flushed from walking rapidly*).— Good afternoon, Miss Ritter. Why are you facing the sun? You should not do that. (*Responds to* Carl's *bow by nodding her head, and takes off her gloves.*)

Carl.— Well I could tell you of quite different capers ——

Isolde.— Old telltale! Get papa.

(Carl *knocks at* Ritter's *door and enters.*)

Sabine.— Will you let me see a moment ——

(Isolde *takes off her eyeglasses.*)

Sabine (*after she has looked at her eyes with a quick, sharp glance*).— And now close them and look down. (*Carefully touches the one and then the other eye with the index and middle fingers of both hands.*) Good. Very good. The tension is normal. Just put on your glasses again. (*While*

Isolde.— Terrible. Aren't you going to faint directly?

Sabine.— I have never fainted.

Isolde.— When you see blood? I have. Have you operated upon some one to-day?

Sabine.— Several.

Isolde (*moving away involuntarily*).— Heavens — a physician — does have a certain resemblance to a cannibal.

Ritter.— Did your hand slip a little?

Sabine (*smiling*).— Slip — you seem not to have quite the correct conception of an operation on the eye.

Ritter.— Well now — did you do your work well or not?

Sabine (*embarrassed and hesitating*).— Yes.

Isolde.— And then you are not telling us a heroic tale? You must tear up the sod a bit ——

Sabine (*surprised*).— Tear up the sod? What does that mean?

Ritter.— Bonnie — silly!

Carl.— Slang expression. Means to put on airs, boast, get in the limelight.

Sabine (*shaking her head slightly*).— A sad sort of pleasure.

Carl.— When one has no reason.

Sabine.— Also when one has reason.

Carl.— In that case it is pardonable — with a genius ——

Sabine (*timid but firm*).— Isn't that the weakness of a king?

Isolde.— Surely a king may allow himself more than other people.

Sabine.— I think he should allow himself less.

Ritter (*who has cleared his throat several times*).— Excuse me. The inner conflict between the sensuous, the moral, and intellectual factors in the life of the hoi polloi.

Sabine (*forgetting herself a moment, with sparkling eyes*).— And the royal polloi?

Isolde (*interrupting brusquely*).— Oh pshaw, oh pshaw! There must be kings and princes and princesses. Isn't that so, Carl? In the fairy tales there always are kings too.

Sabine— And beggars.

(ANNA *has removed the coffee cups and serves the cream from a glass bowl.*)

(ISOLDE *has risen and braids thin braids of* RITTER'S *hair.*)

Ritter (*to* SABINE, *who is just taking some cream*).— Why don't you take a good portion? Now do eat in the name of three whole devils.

Isolde.— Courteous request. Hold still, you Chinaman, or I'll tear out a whole tuft of your hair.

Carl (*shakes himself with laughter*).— Chinaman, Chinaman.

Ritter (*to* SABINE).— Won't you have some fruit? (*Passes her the currants.*) Some riles. Wagner was so fond of them. Are you conversant with the works of Wagner?

Isolde (*simultaneously to* CARL).— Don't choke.

Sabine.— Not at all.

Ritter (*incredulous*).— Not — at all? Not even 'Lohengrin'?

Sabine (*again in her former embarrassment*).— I have so little time— and if a person is not gifted — interest of course grows out of talent for a thing.

Ritter.— Incredible! — How can a person ——

Isolde (*with an air of superiority toward her father*).— Yes, papa, not every one can be as smart as you. Such a smarty of smarties. Miss Graef, just look at him. He is a John the Baptist. The John the Baptist of the Wagnerian cause, that's what they called him when he was young. Isn't that true, papa?

Ritter (*half flattered, half smiling*).— Yes — you know I helped batter down the doors a bit for the new art.

Isolde.— He was once a revolutionist, the gentle beastie. But I have nevertheless no respect at all for him. Are you my papa? Oh no, you are not my papa at all. You are my baby, and I mother you. He's so lean. How his clothes fairly wrap down on him! Gracious — it's funny — such an Armitschka.

Sabine (*speaks gently with deep emotion*).— You love him very much.

Isolde (*kisses his hair*).— One is forced to love him. (*Pulls him up by his braid.*) Done! Now don't pull it apart right off, my work of art. It seems to me that no one is eating any more. Then I will suspend the meal. Whoever cares to may still help himself. Isn't that it, Carl?

Ritter.— And now? Into the garden?

Sabine.— There is still too much sun for Miss Isolde.

Ritter.— A cigar, Carl? The ladies will excuse us for a few moments. (*In an undertone to* CARL.) You know, I'd like to take a peep at the evening paper — it must be here by this time.

Isolde.— *M. Excuse — ladies* ——

Ritter.— Isn't it true now? I know how to be gallant on occasions.

Isolde (*seized by a thought*).— But — Miss Graef, don't you smoke? Cigarettes?

Sabine.— Thank you.

Carl.— Isn't that part and parcel of a doctor?

Sabine.— Not for me.

Ritter (*eagerly*).— Correct, correct. Women should not be chimneys. Not so much talk, children, not so much talk. (*Off into his room with* CARL.)

Isolde (*calling after him*).— Papa — don't put the lighted end in your mouth. (*To* SABINE.) You know, he doesn't know how to smoke, he always has some accident.

(SABINE *has sat down in an armchair at the right, near the front, and looks at* ISOLDE *intently.*)

Isolde (*still standing*).— Is something the matter with me — since you are looking at me so peculiarly?

Sabine.— No — no. I like you — as never before.

Isolde (*sits down*).— Isn't that true? The dress is chic.

Sabine (*her head inclining to the side a little*).— How dear you were to him — how cute — and how much you resemble him — in such moments.

Isolde.— Papa. But, Miss Graef — why I am the very image of my mother.

Sabine.— An inner resemblance, you know.

(ANNA *enters, clears off the table.*)

Isolde.— Pardon me. — Anna, the bowls you are to leave and the glass plates. (*Turns to* SABINE *again.*) What were you going to say?

Sabine.— You always ought to act as you do to-day.

Isolde (*leaning back comfortably*).— That's just the way I treat him — when I am in a good humor. He's really such a good little man.

Sabine.— He is more than good. He is kind.

Isolde.— And you must not think that he lacks culture, on account of the few plain expressions — it's just fun.

Sabine.— But dear Miss Ritter, do you regard me as so lacking in culture. He is as distinguished as only children are in their bearing. So pure. So youthful.

Isolde.— And yet he is an Armitschka. He takes everything to heart so much. When I do not feel so well — I am only afraid on his account. Then his face becomes so quiet — so little and pale — and in his voice there is something so gentle. Oh, it's terrible!

Sabine.— Aren't you partly to blame for that? You are not frank, Miss Ritter, you are not frank. You keep your father in continual error in regard to your condition — and in regard to the possibilities of recovery. I could not do that. I could keep nothing secret. Now see here, the next incident may be much harder for him — as for instance on the first evening — I just thought of myself in time — and he believes that you still have one-half of your vision in the left eye. Not one-tenth. You know it, of course.

Isolde.— I cannot tell him. I should rather be killed. And even if I become stone-blind.

Sabine.— You are not right. Not right. His emotions are sensitive, not weak.

Isolde.— Why what do you know about him? I know him. He will be crushed, really he will be crushed, my papa. You evil creature! (*Begins to cry.*)

Sabine (*jumps up quickly and puts her arms around her from behind*).— Dear Isolde — dear child — that least of all — above all do not cry — you will harm yourself — please — do not cry.

Isolde (*quickly consoled, already half smiling*).— When you torment a person in that way. You are à la grandma.

Sabine (*has sat down again*).— And you, you are like all sick children. And even one without a mother.

Isolde (*with spurious sentimentality*).— Isn't that true? What things have already broken into my young life — so much misfortune. Do you like to attend balls?

Sabine.— I have never been at a ball.

Isolde (*looks at her incredulously*).— Oh!

Sabine.— I do not know how to dance.

Isolde.— You unfortunate creature. But how are you going to get married then?

Sabine (*laughs heartily*).— Why I don't care to at all.

Isolde.— Oh, a person says that — if I had not become ill — at nineteen I should surely have had a husband — as soon as I was old enough to understand about marriage. Why, how old are you? I shall not repeat it.

Sabine.— Please — I am twenty-eight.

Isolde.— Twenty-eight? Well then you had better make haste. Before thirty it is not so very difficult. But after — every one stops to consider — an old maid.

Sabine.— That's what I shall be.

Isolde (*looks at her quizzically*).— Did you set your heart on some one? An unhappy love?

Sabine.— My dear Miss Ritter, if a person has always had as much work as I have had — he doesn't find any time for an unhappy love.

Isolde.— I have been in love — a hundred times. There are such interesting young men. And especially when they have a bit of *haut gout.* With a man that is not a disadvantage, you know. Oh yes, men. After all they are the only entertaining thing in life. Carl is provokingly virtuous. Does he strike you favorably?

Sabine.— I do not know him.

Isolde.— Good, a very good boy. But no talent for women. So one just has to put up with him.

Sabine (*gets up, a little oppressed*).— I don't know, Miss Ritter — I do not understand you — but you make me so sad.

Isolde (*also gets up and confidentially takes* SABINE'S *arm*).— You must make some confessions to me. You surely must have an interesting and piquant life behind you.

Sabine.— Oh, no.

Isolde.— A woman physician! And you can talk to me *sans gene*. I am no longer so naively stupid. So you have already seen naked people.

Sabine.— Yes.

Isolde.— Women — and men?

Sabine.— Yes.

Isolde.— Goodness, that's really improper. Does it give you pleasure?

Sabine (*disengages herself from her arm and looks firmly into her eyes*).— What do you mean by that?

Isolde (*bold and without compunction*).— You must know quite a bit that one does not generally know — girls. In books it is sometimes hinted at — in medical books that must be much worse? Isn't one spoiled by that?

Sabine (*looks at her sidewise*).— It depends upon the person, not the book — it seems to me.

Isolde.— Did you always read simply for the purpose of learning? Or also from curiosity?

Sabine.— Would you read anything like that from curiosity?

(ISOLDE *blushes, laughs, makes no answer, and looks at the point of her foot, moving her toes to and fro in her shoe.*)

(SABINE *slowly presses her folded arms closer together, and in a way withdraws from* ISOLDE.)

Isolde (*pretends her lips and throws back her head*).— I am certainly grown up. Secrets make you curious. You think about it — and it is pleasant — such a drowsy summer evening — in the balmy heat. (*Laughs to herself, with eyes half closed, inclines her head back upon her right arm and passionately kisses her left hand.*)

Sabine (*somewhat ill, only gazes at* ISOLDE).— And that in addition to all the rest! Do you know what I shall prescribe for you, Miss Ritter? A cold shower bath every day, and you must get something to do — some occupation.

Isolde (*looking at her with great disappointment*).— And that is all that you are going to tell me?

Sabine.— Tell? What, pray? In a certain sense it might be true that you know more than I do. And what I know is not proper for unhealthy sentiments — for this half-mature hysteria.

Isolde (*moving away in a hostile manner*).— Oh — that is the way you are.

have more exercise anyhow. We must change her whole mode of life — the diet and ——

Ritter (*interrupting, frightened*).— On account of her eyes?

Sabine.— No — not directly. The eyes are in as good a condition as one can expect with a state that has become chronic.

Ritter.— I am so grateful to you. Oh, I tell you, this relief, of finally having a rational physician, for that is certainly your work, the improvement I mean.

Sabine.— Not at all, Mr. Ritter, not in the least! You are completely mistaken. Any physician could have treated your daughter in the same way ——

Ritter.— Could have. But they were not able to! I judge by success. No, there has been improvement.

Sabine.— Quite of its own accord, of its own accord. Just as little explained as the cause of the illness. (*Clenching both fists.*) This cause, this cause! It awakens me from my sleep — and there is no way out.

Ritter.— Now don't start that up again. I haven't quite forgiven you for that first evening yet. That wasn't kind, Miss Graef, that wasn't kind! Such things!

Sabine.— You must not judge me too harshly. You know, I did not know you at that time. As a conscientious physician I had to ask the question which offended you so much.

Ritter.— Offended? Angered! And I tell you ——

Sabine.— You need not say any more at all. The prolonged observation of the illness has convinced me that I was mistaken, completely mistaken in my surmise. Does that satisfy you?

Ritter (*looks at her, then breathes with relief*).— Yes, I still had a kind of constraint toward you.

Sabine.— Of course it sometimes leaves one in the lurch — rule and experience ——

Ritter.— There you are with your famous modern science. Twice two are four. Of course! As if there were nothing anonymous in the world. Now remember, man should not have too much reason. And you decidedly have too much reason.

Sabine.— Do you think so? I have an ardent request, Mr. Ritter.

Ritter.— Out with it!

Sabine.— I should like so much to hear you play.

Ritter.— Miss Graef! ! My fingers are like matches. And I no longer have an inclination for the piano. It's a stupid instrument. Orchestra and the human voice, that's the thing! And I am a piano player, not a

virtuoso. I am no longer suited to the present generation — at bottom there has been only one virtuoso — Liszt.

Sabine.— Doesn't the past magnify him?

Ritter.— Him? He played a glissando, so you would imagine some one was laughing. And such a chromatic wail — not the straw music of to-day. How naively he played Mozart — and in general — that prepotence of conception — and his works!

Sabine.— Have you never composed?

Ritter (*looks at her and raises his eyebrows*).— Nothing comes to me any more. And something must occur to one. Not much lost. The little song-business of former days. I am lazy, too. If one has no one at his side who takes a delight in it ——

Sabine.— I should be so delighted.

Ritter.— You? You anti-musical creature?

Sabine (*hesitating*).— I — as a child I — as a very young girl — I learned to play the violin a little. Oh, very poorly. In order to play the accompaniments for the school children — for my father — and because I also was to become a teacher.

Ritter.— And you gave it up?

Sabine.— Entirely.

Ritter.— Sinful, really sinful. I can tell by your nose that you would have had talent.

Sabine.— I had to give it up on account of my calling. The sensitiveness of the finger tips is dulled by pressing down on the strings.

Ritter.— Oh, yes — your silly calling. How in the world did you come by that — by such an unnatural thing?

Sabine.— Unusual thing — how?

Ritter.— Womanish caprice, probably.

Sabine.— No, Mr. Ritter. My father suffered with eye trouble all of his life and became blind a short time before his death.

Ritter.— Long ago?

Sabine.— Very long. Twelve years. And my mother — still longer.

Ritter.— But relatives, surely.

Sabine.— None.

Ritter.— Poor thing.

Sabine.— It is well so. No duties toward others — only a great duty toward one's self.

Ritter.— Duty, duty — such a merely utilitarian existence — that is just as if a person has studied all the tricks of counterpoint and then cannot invent a melody.

Sabine.— Yes, one lives as if in the shadow of a wall.

Ritter.— Haven't you been at home for a long time? Where is your home? In the North? Of course.

Sabine.— Yes. On the North Sea. A little fisher village. I've been gone eleven years.

Ritter.— Do you love it, the sea?

Sabine.— (*breathing deeply*).— The sea — oh!

Ritter.— I should certainly become seasick. Do you really like that, one of those great storms and the tossing billows?

Sabine.— That also. But above all — the twilight. When it lies there — still in its gray sanctity — one does not know its depth — but one feels it.

Ritter (*looks at* SABINE *with increasing admiration, who looks before her with wide open eyes, breathes deeply and is motionless. Bursting out*).— Miss Graef. You *are* beautiful as a picture.

(SABINE *blushes and places one hand over her face.*)

Ritter.— You may let me say that to you quite safely. Do you know that I shall be fifty in a few weeks — old man — rickety — rusted in ——

Sabine (*half sadly*).— You are young nevertheless.

Ritter.— Tell me more about yourself.

Sabine (*quickly*).— No, no. That is not well: to talk about one's self. One runs into mistakes and loses the feeling for his error. Just play for me a little.

Ritter (*gently shakes his head*).— No, Miss Graef. Why? Why it's all a halfway affair.

(SABINE *raises her hands imploring once more.*)

Ritter.— Don't go to any trouble, dear Miss Graef. I am resting on the side track. You don't understand that! Well, you are young, you see. When a person is young he always puts on very much pedal — forte — because many stand around one and listen — later one becomes more alone, and then one learns to play — piano — pianissimo —— (*Takes one of her hands.*) Moreover you are a good girl. Really a very good girl.

(SABINE *stands before him, her head sinks slowly, he places his other hand on her head and looks down at her pensively.*)

(ISOLDE *and* CARL *slowly come up over the veranda.*)

Isolde (*in a low tone, astonished, to* CARL).— Now just look at them! Shouldn't one suppose they had ——

ACT III

The curtains are lowered completely. A few bars of sunlight on the floor. ISOLDE *lies on the sofa, pale and nervous, with her feet drawn up.*

A knock at the door.

Isolde (*with teeth set*).— Well, who is it again? (*Aloud.*) Come in.

Carl (*enters, wearing a cravanette, short trousers, and a green hunter's cap. Carries a large bouquet of alpine roses in his hand*).— Your servant, Bonnie.

Isolde (*half weary, half ill-humored*).— Hello.

Carl (*puts his hat on the table*).— Well?

Isolde.— What?

Carl.— How is it? With you?

Isolde (*with angry irony*).— Ex—cel—lent. Haven't had the honor for a long time.

Carl.— Three days.

Isolde.— Four.

Carl.— And three hours and twenty minutes and seven seconds. I suppose I shall still be allowed to take a tramp. (*Gives her the bouquet.*) There now.

Isolde.— Buy it?

Carl.— Well now, how so? (*Slips up his coat sleeve and shows her a large bruise.*) Almost paid for it with — my dear life.

Isolde.— Hweh! Have you that hunting shirt on again — it smells so much of sweat.

Carl.— In dress suit, claque, and patent-leather boots I can not tumble around on the train. Miss Contrary!

Isolde.— You may go.

Carl (*puts his hands into his trousers pockets and marches up and down with great strides, conciliatingly*).— Don't be grouchy— as they say out there. Is the old man at home?

Isolde.— Gone — city.

Carl.— Where? Why? What is he doing?

Isolde.— Singing lesson.

Carl.— He is giving a singing lesson? To whom?

Isolde.— Her.

Carl.— What her? Do say at least three words in succession! Come!

Isolde.— Graef. He has had a piano taken into her garret den.

Carl.— She is learning to sing. Holy jimjam!

Isolde (*her teeth set*).— Oh — she has a beautiful voice.

Carl.— Have you heard her?

Isolde.— No, papa says so.

Carl.— Then it probably ——

Isolde.— And she is an *individuality*. And full of intellectual fervor. And resourceful. And distinguished — and — goodness, I don't know what else in addition.

Carl.— Your papa says that?

(ISOLDE *does not answer, bites her kerchief.*)

Carl.— Is she still coming every day?

Isolde.— No. Not any more. The professor is back. He comes twice a week and she comes once. But he runs in almost every day. Every — day.

Carl (*in an uncertain manner*).— And what do you suppose, that they— I mean ——

Isolde.— What they are up to — together? Nothing. Nothing at all. He converses with her.

Carl.— Why, she doesn't know anything about music.

Isolde.— She. Oh, she is a keen one! And her claim of being not vain and not coquettish — lately she had on new shoes — patent leather with steel beads in front.

Carl.— That certainly made no impression upon your papa. What in the world can come of this tutoring? If a woman pleases a fellow, it is not by any means a serious matter on that account. Come, you are working yourself up unnecessarily.

Isolde.— Serious? Well that *would* be fine. He is courting her. He is interested in her. The old are always the worst.

Carl.— And in a few weeks grass and music will grow over it. Just let him go.

Isolde (*slowly, stammering, finally beginning to weep feverishly*).—And I? And I! I love him and am to be subordinated to her, and have nothing — and only him in the whole world, and I am so ill and miserable ——

Carl.— Why do you think he will love you less? Now do not cry, you little hippopotamus.

Isolde.— He is to love me alone, only me. I want him alone ——

Carl.— Why, he loves only you.

Isolde.— Is that so? But he doesn't ask nearly as often how I'm getting along. He is absent minded and plays the piano horribly much, and composes, as it seems to me. And donates money for blind children.

Carl.— If not to blind children, he probably would give it to gypsy musicians.

Isolde.— Recently I wanted to order a hat from Paris — and he said no. No. He said no to me. That it was too expensive! Eighty francs, too expensive.

Carl.— Eighty francs — one can buy etchings by Klinger for that.

Isolde.— Formerly he would not have refused it to me. She is to blame — she. Without her he would never had summoned up courage to do it. I am to have nothing any more, nothing at all. (*Jumping up*

suddenly, with a wild ejaculation.) What do I care for the hat! But I want my papa back, my papa. Carl, if he does not love me any more, but her, the smart one — then I'll jump out of the window so they will find me dead below!

Carl (*takes her into his arms, frightened*).— Bonnie, dearest, my only sweet golden Bonnie.

Isolde (*trembling in his arms, pressing herself close to his breast*).— He doesn't care for me any more — because I am ill and ugly and stupid and old ——

Carl.— Why she is much older.

Isolde.— But she is healthy! So coldly healthy! I am ill and no one loves me.

Carl (*fiery*).— Bonnie, there is one — one ——

Isolde.— Yes, you — you are the only one that understands me — and you do not understand me either. (*Puts both hands around his neck.*) You — you!

Carl (*beside himself*).— Isolde — the moment has come! Do you love me? As Isolde loved Tristan — not merely — I mean because we have known each other for a long time.

Isolde (*pressed closely to him*).— I have such a fear in me, such a fear — am I really still pretty at all?

Carl.— Beautiful, beautiful as an angel — as a goddess.

Isolde.— Prettier than she. Do you like me?

Carl.— My queen.

Isolde (*passes one hand over her hair*).— Oh, my hair is so disorderly!

(CARL *holds her firmly to his bosom. After a few seconds he lets loose of her frightened, and turns away breathing heavily.*)

Isolde (*disappointed*).— Only?

Carl (*turns to her again*).— Now you are mine. I shall speak to your father. I shall make representations to him. I might say, that it — in my observations it had struck me ——

Isolde.— But you must do that very skillfully. I do not want him to notice that I have said anything — he must think that it has occurred to you — he must not believe that I am jealous — I am too proud for that.

Carl.— Just depend upon me — I shall do it with the greatest diplomatic calmness — I am just in the right mood ——

Isolde (*with a gentle prolonged sound, burying her face in both hands*).— Oh — oh!

Carl.— Does anything ail you?

Isolde.— Here it comes again — in my eye — there is such a pressure — as if it were to burst.

Carl.— Again? Why, has it come — in the last few days?

Isolde.— During the day, no. In the last nights. And there I lie and swallow it. Why, no one asks me any more. Why, I can perish — oh! (*Her voice forsakes her, her face becomes rigid with pain.*)

Carl (*running to and fro aimlessly*).— Do you want beer — water — or what in the world shall I ——

Isolde.— No — to my bed — please — lead me.

(CARL *leads her into her bedroom and closes the door from within. The stage remains empty for a moment.*)

(RITTER *quickly opens the veranda door, sunlight floods the room.*)

(SABINE *follows somewhat slower. She wears a plain white dress with a black belt and a large light straw hat.*)

Ritter (*continuing the conversation with eagerness and somewhat angrily*).— And I tell you, our time must not relinquish the right of feeling linked with the infinite. It is for the artist, who — the artist must be a liberator of life. Art must be religion for him.

Sabine.— And all the poor creatures who are not artists? The people?

Ritter.— Artists and the people can get in touch with each other— there is a common domain — religion.

Sabine.— What religion?

Ritter.— Christianity. Of course.

Sabine.— What Christianity? Catholic, Protestant ——

Ritter.— The faith, I mean, the idea ——

Sabine.— Faith, idea — these are funeral ships. We shall not get together on that. You see the image of God in man. I look upon him as the most highly developed biological type. I do not comprehend your divine truth.

Ritter.— Why surely that is not a proof against my truth, because you are too stupid to comprehend it. Your animal truth is unworthy, ruinous.

Sabine.— That is also no proof against *it.* Only whatever — in the arena of rational activity ——

Ritter.— Reason? What does it do? What is it able to do? Negative effects! What comes of it, the rational madness of the French Revolution reveals. What is it? In the most favorable event? The gilded impotence of the soul.

Sabine (*smiling*).— Why has a woman a soul? A medieval council quarreled about it.

Ritter.— You have one! Beyond a doubt. But it is secluded. It must come out. The feelings! Naive joyousness. I should like to put you right back into the Middle Ages. When there were still castles and knights and errant minstrels ——

Sabine.— And tithes.

Ritter (*is quiet for a moment, then raging*).— But you are the most unendurable woman that has ever come to my attention! (*Walks to and fro and grumbles.*)

Sabine.— And you are so dear — so dear. (*Goes toward him with folded hands.*) Scold me a little more, but don't be so angry at me. How am I to blame that I am suffering from intellectual scotoma? That I have a limited field of vision? I know too many graveyard stories. And worse things. Do you think that all tragedies end with death? Please! Please!

Ritter (*still grumbling, but already somewhat assuaged*).— Well, yes — just take off that gear now.

Sabine.— What — the hat?

Ritter.— Yes. That contraption of a hat. I like to see the crown of your head.

(SABINE *takes off her hat.*)

Ritter (*puts his hands on her shoulders, so she is compelled to stoop over a little*).— There now — that is just like a line of notes. And now we will not quarrel any more. Now be a little amiable to me.

Sabine.— Really I have no time for that. I should like to see Isolde first ——

Ritter.— No time again. No time to be amiable. (*He presses her down on a chair.*) Sit. That's it, you working woman. (*Moves his chair up to her, sits down, his legs slightly apart, his elbows on his knees, his hands folded between his knees, moving his hands up and down a little.*) Now just let me look at you. Quite fine. Quite fine. You are really getting pretty. I like you. Do you know it?

(SABINE *does not answer, looks at him directly with eyes wide open.*)

Ritter.— If you will be very good, I'll show you something.

Sabine (*brightening up*).— You have composed?

Ritter (*laughs with a disdainful gesture of the hand*).— Not worth a farthing. You will like it. Of course you know nothing about it. But you must sing it.

Sabine.— I? You certainly know how frightened I always am in your presence. And you quarreled with me so much in the lesson to-day as it is.

Ritter.— Because you always insist on not opening your mouth. (*Sings a tone in imitation with closed lips.*) Teeth always set. You will sing now. That is quite good for you; read the notes. Why, your hearing would answer for three. Now then! No capers. (*He takes* SABINE *by the wrist and draws her to the piano, where he pulls out a crumpled piece of paper*

covered with notes.) See here — (*shows it to her*). Key of B. Five sharps. Quite simple. (*Sits down and indicates the note for her.*)

Sabine (*accompanied by* RITTER, *sings timidly at first, then with growing assurance and involuntary interpretation*).

As pretty as a flower,
Charming and pure thou art;
I look at thee and sadness
Comes stealing o'er my heart.

I place my hands with blessing
Upon thy head demure,
Praying that God may keep thee
So charming and so pure.

Ritter (*has looked at her angrily at the word sadness, and has called out*).— Open your mouth! (*They have finished.*)

(SABINE *looks at the floor silently.*)

Ritter (*gets up, without being affected at all*).— That was quite decent. Still too much dilettante sentimentality. Moreover I must change the tierce. (*Corrects the note with a pencil.*) I suppose that that comedy in notes has been composed three hundred and twenty-five times. I am the three hundred and twenty-sixth man. (*Since* SABINE *still remains silent.*) Don't you like it? Don't be backward about saying so.

Sabine (*gently*).— It is marvelously beautiful.

Ritter (*sways his head*).— Goodness, goodness! It seems to me that I was thinking of you, you sometimes have something about you like the — what do you call them — like the dark flowers that open at night.

Carl (*has pushed back the door to* ISOLDE'S *room a little, has remained standing a moment and now comes forward. His face is red, and he is reserved to the point of rudeness*).— I have the honor. (*Makes a stiff bow to* SABINE.)

Ritter (*still correcting his composition*).— Oh, yes, Carl. Here's to you, Carl. Safely back from the clouds? Have a fine view?

Carl.— I should like to request that the vocal numbers be postponed to another time. One can hear too plainly in the next room, and since Isolde seems very ill to me ——

Ritter (*rushes toward the door of the bedroom*).— Heavens!

Carl (*holds him back*).— Please — I don't believe that Isolde wishes to see you — after this concert.

Sabine (*steps between the two. Entirely calm, completely changed to the manner of her first appearance, and beginning to speak during the last three words of* CARL).— Permit me — why, I shall immediately see what it means.

Carl (*bitterly*).— You might be mistaken.

Ritter (*without paying attention to his words*).— Do not be anxious unnecessarily. It is probably of no significance. (*Off into* ISOLDE's *room.*)

Ritter (*drops into a chair*).— Have you been — with my child for some time?

Carl (*continues to be rude, with suppressed irritation*).— Long.

Ritter.— I was at Miss Graef's.

Carl.— As usual.

Ritter.— It refreshes me. I go to see her frequently.

Carl.— And Isolde is frequently alone.

Ritter.— I should like so much to provide company for her — a few nice young girls — but if one is not acquainted with any family.

Carl.— Yes, indeed — so the difference between her youth and theirs might be made still more perceptible to her.

Ritter.— You *are* quite right. It is a pinch mill. What is a fellow to do however? I certainly do all that is in my power.

Carl (*strikes his breast, with a withering look and with outstretched hand*).— That you do not do!

Ritter (*turns around on his chair, not believing that he hears correctly, half laughing*).— Carl — are you addled?

Carl (*somewhat offended, but with the same show of feeling*).— I have made up my mind to call your attention to your parental duty. My manhood forbids me from further witnessing how Isolde — is being abused.

Ritter (*about to jump up, reflects and says calmly*).— Go on.

Carl.— You do not abuse her physically, but psychically. Her smallest wishes are relentlessly denied her. No one pays any attention to her ailments any more. Day after day she is becoming more helpless and lonesome. Her youth and beauty are drooping and withering — she is suffering a kind of martyrdom. You are nailing her to a cross —— (*Breaks out in tears from the emotion induced by his own words.*)

Ritter (*has risen and goes to and fro*).— Dear boy, why it is blooming nonsense, the stuff that you are reeling off. Blow your nose thoroughly. Who in the world has planted that in your skull — now then — first blow your nose thoroughly.

Carl (*deeply offended*).— For you the affair is funny — yes, indeed.

Ritter (*stops walking*).— No, Carl — for me the affair is tragic. (*With a gesture of displeasure for himself.*) The devil! Is a man to open his mouth about that — that I have sacrificed myself — for my child? Of course a person does anything for his child — I shall certainly not sing you a song of that.

Carl.— You cannot.

Ritter.— I do not care to — the devil take it! I look like a braggard to myself.

Carl.— But you slight Isolde — as compared with other people.

Ritter.— For whom — do I slight her, for whom? I separate from my mother on her account. Good, I understand, they cannot get along. I know well enough that Isolde is most to blame — but she is ill. And so I leave this woman of seventy alone.

Carl (*with childish malice*).— Oh, how angry you are getting because you are conscious of guilt. I mean quite other persons — young persons.

Ritter.— Let me tell you something, Carl. I haven't the patience now, and I am not in the proper mood — march off. To-morrow will also be a day. Possibly we can come to an agreement more quickly to-morrow.

Carl.— And then there is another trifle.

Ritter.— Presto!

Carl.— I have just convinced myself that you have forfeited not only external but your inner paternal rights. It will be very agreeable for you to get rid of her in a pleasant manner. I shall marry Isolde.

(RITTER *stands with mouth wide open.*)

Carl.— Isolde is twenty-one, and of age according to Austrian law.

Ritter (*shaking off his stupor and advancing toward him*).— And you are (*restrains himself*) not of age.

Carl.— If you think that you can dispose of me in this manner ——

Ritter.— And if you do not stop molesting me with your Hallowe'en ideas —— (*Controlling himself with an effort.*) Oh, well, well, well, well, well. You are simply young and daft.

Carl.— You know very well that the early loss of my father and my own serious nature have matured me beyond my years.

Ritter (*again good natured and half laughing*).— Proof: this young man desires, with a monthly income — I cannot compute it down to a half-penny — and because you feel a little flaring sentimentality for two blond braids ——

Carl.— I love Isolde as a man.

Ritter (*puts his hands into his trousers pocket, matter of fact manner*).— Don't believe it.

Carl.— I shall ——

Ritter (*interrupting*).— Prove it — I know. And I will even tell you how you can prove it. By this, that you do not disturb my poor girl with your follies. You surely did not say anything to her?

Carl.— No, but ——

Ritter (*continuing*).— By swallowing your unfortunate love as quickly

as possible. I cannot give her to you. Don't you see that yourself? Why, that would be indecent of me — and to you.

Carl.— Because you have no idea of my heart, because you do not know what a deep and eternal feeling ——

Ritter (*cross*).— Eternal feeling. Stuff and nonsense!

Carl.— I shall take better care of Isolde than you, even if we shall be poor.

Ritter.— With boarding-house hash?

Carl.— For I shall love her more. You only love her in a kind of incidental way, when your other interests are not disturbed by it. You know nothing of sacrifices and relinquishing, you have no ideals ——

Ritter.— Certainly not yours. And now ring off. I have tried to persuade you in kindness and in anger. If it has not helped that skull of yours in spite of all, it belongs to a fool or a rascal. Do you want to fight a duel with me now? I have nothing in the way of weapons ——

Carl (*retreats from him*).— It is all over between us.

Ritter.— Good, good. For how long?

Carl.— Forever. (*Goes to the veranda.*)

Ritter.— *Au revoir.* Day after to-morrow.

(CARL *off without responding.*)

Ritter.— And now he is even offended.

(SABINE *comes out of the bedroom, her face is pale and serious.*)

Ritter (*goes to meet her*).— Miss Sabine — why I have just had a scene — but how is it? (*Stumbling over himself continually in his excitement.*) That boy — that Carl — no it is not to be believed — he wants to marry — Isolde — he! !

Sabine (*smiling involuntarily*).— Oh!

Ritter.— And he spreads it on — with an aplomb — and calls me down — I do not love her enough — he loves her fervently — and forever — and I have no ideals — because I do not believe in it — this eternity ——

Sabine.— Did he tell Isolde something?

Ritter.— No, he didn't. That to boot! Finally I could not help it, and became gruff — not very — and now he is mortally offended and isn't coming back. I should feel quite badly about it, quite badly! Why, it is a colossal stupidity — but there is something touching about it.

Sabine.— Are you possibly going to beg his pardon?

Ritter.— What harm would there be in that, after all? I shall exact his word of honor that he will not speak to Isolde about the folly. And what will Bonnie do if he does not come any more — the child was so accustomed to him? (*Suddenly recollecting*) But! You haven't yet told me at all — you are so quiet — (*crying out*) Sabine! !

Sabine.— Not loud — only not loud. (*She takes* RITTER'S *hands, her eyes are large and firmly fastened upon him. He grows calm under her eye.*)

Ritter.— Yes — yes — but you must speak.

Sabine (*with some effort*).— Matters are worse.

Ritter (*scarcely audible*).— The left eye.

Sabine.— Both eyes.

Ritter (*lets loose of her hands, repeating with a heavy tongue*).— Both eyes.

Sabine (*gently but quickly in order to brush the anxiety aside*).— Great increase of pressure in the left eye, which I found to be only slight on the first evening. Pronounced glaucoma. In the right eye there is no pressure, but iritis.

Ritter.— But the cause, the cause!

Sabine.— Her eyelids look as if she had wept, had wept much. When you told me about that affair a moment ago I was ready to believe—— Has she had other excitement? Strong emotional experiences? Intense anger sometimes causes an increase of pressure.

Ritter.— I don't know a thing.

Sabine.— Also her disposition seems different to me — something hard, bitter — may, of course, be due to the pain.

Ritter (*turns his face toward her and raises his clenched hands, one over the other, to his lips*).— Help — help.

Sabine.— Help is possible. Operation.

Ritter (*totters,* SABINE *holds him. After a pause*).— Must it be?

Sabine.— It must be.

Ritter (*goes up and down a few times in order to get control of himself, then remains standing before* SABINE).— What kind of an operation?

Sabine.— On the left eye. Iridectomy upward.

Ritter.— Is it dangerous?

Sabine (*after a moment of reflection*).— Not without danger. The iris is probably very atrophic.

Ritter.— Not without danger. And when?

Sabine.— As soon as the condition of the eye permits it. To-morrow. Day after to-morrow.

Ritter (*continually clinging to the same thought*).— Not without danger.

Sabine.— Berger is a very skillful operator.

Ritter (*turns around quickly*).— Berger?! You!

(SABINE *is silent.*)

Ritter (*repeating more urgently*).— Why you! You!

Sabine.— No.

Ritter.— Miss Graef!! I have confidence only in you, in you. That

is the only circumstance that can relieve me. And Berger, of course, will not have the slightest objection — and if he had ——

Sabine (*gently*).— I cannot do it.

Ritter.— Why? What? Cannot? Silliness! Why?

Sabine.— Because I shall be afraid.

Ritter (*half enraged*).— You afraid? Woman!

Sabine (*with expressive sadness*).— Yes, I have *learned* to *fear.*

Ritter.— But, tell me, why are you afraid?

Sabine (*without ostentation*).— Because it is your child.

Ritter.— But for that reason you certainly must do me the one great favor — if you have only a spark of love for me. See here — I will apologize to your damned science. I beg you, I beg —— (*He cannot speak on.*)

Sabine (*struggling with herself*).— Why, I shall never be able to take a knife in my hand again if on this occasion I ——

Ritter.— Well?

(SABINE *shakes her head.*)

Ritter (*breaking out in great rage*).— You are a goose!

Sabine (*looks at him, is seized with deep, whole-souled laughter*).— Yes, Mr. Ritter, you are right. That is what I am. And yet it will turn out that you are wrong. I shall perform the operation. And I promise you that the goose will *put on* the finest coloboma that ——

Ritter (*half touched, half grumbling*).— Don't understand what that means, but it's probably all right. With which hand do you cut, pray tell?

Sabine.— With the right one — of course.

Ritter (*quickly takes her hand and kisses it*).— Play well!

ACT IV

Gray, rainy afternoon. The veranda door closed. On the piano chair a black jacket and SABINE'S *hat. On the sofa crumpled pillows and a cover, which has partly fallen down. On the table a bowl with roses in full bloom.*

RITTER *and* CARL *enter through the door of the anteroom. Both wear hats and overcoats, their collars turned up, wet with rain. Following them* ANNA.

Ritter.— No, just take your things off here, the corridor is too dark in this rainy weather.

(ANNA *helps* CARL *take off his things and carries his wraps back to a chair, leaning the umbrella beside it. She carries* RITTER'S *wraps into his room.*)

Ritter (*while she is going out, pointing to* SABINE'S *hat*).— Is she here?

Anna.— Miss Graef is with Miss Ritter.

Ritter (*rubs his red hands*).— Oh, you will have to wait, Carl. Regular November weather. Something warm, a cup of tea, Carl?

Carl.— Thank you, thank you.

Ritter.— What a time! Well, my boy — it is all over now. Do you want this chair or rather that one? Or the sofa? There — to be sure — the pillows are still lying — for Bonnie.

Carl.— When was she out of bed for the first time?

Ritter.— Day before yesterday. An hour. One must be very careful. A work of art! After an operation of that kind. I stood before the door, I tell you, before the door — shouldn't like to go through it a second time.

Carl.— She did not take chloroform?

Ritter.— No. Miss Graef did not favor that, and Bonnie did not want to herself. She stood up under it like a heroine. Not a twitch, not a sound. All were delighted. The assistant, the nurse, and the professor.

Carl.— Berger was present?

Ritter.— Yes. For those people that is a kind of theater. He said, moreover, that Miss Graef had simply performed a masterpiece. He is going to put it into the medical weekly, moreover. She had performed the finest coloboma that he had seen in his whole practice. And the iris was so atrophic that it was impossible to plant it, and the sphincter ——

Carl.— You have become learned.

Ritter.— Why, what have I been hearing for three weeks? And her behavior was still finer. She did not budge from Bonnie's bed, made every bandage herself, spent the nights in the armchair beside her — and as calm, as gentle — as a mother.

Carl.— It probably flattered her vanity — and possibly a certain calculation ——

Ritter.— Not a trace of vanity, I tell you. She is really such a rare creature, one that cannot help but be good. She is not of the kind to have her conviction on one side and her deeds on the other. That is all in such harmony ——

Carl.— You are considerably charmed with her.

Ritter.— Have every cause in the world, too. A capital creature. All respect for such a person. Such intense honesty — a relief in all this modern humbug.

(*Pause.*)

Carl.— Hasn't she asked at all — about me?

Ritter.— Yes, indeed — several times, why you did not come at all. Moreover, I must say a word or two to you before I allow you to go in to her.

Carl.— You will not deny me the last ——

Ritter.— Dear boy, let us be quite clear about our mutual kindly

feelings. You consider me a tyrant, and I consider you an exceedingly kind child, a bit harebrained. Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Because you are going away to-night, you are to see Isolde once more, in God's name. And I should really not know how I should motivate it, if you were not to say farewell. Under a grim condition. You will give me your word of honor not to speak to Isolde about — about — matrimony and that kind of thing. Understand? How glad you will be in three years that I am so cruel.

Carl.— You roll a stone into my breast for my whole life ——

Ritter.— I have your word?

Carl (*with sentimental feeling*).— My word of honor as a man.

Ritter (*puts his hands on his shoulder*).— Goodness, Carl, why I like you so much. And I am so grateful to you for every little pleasure that you have given the child ——

Carl.— And your relentlessness ——

Ritter.— Because I love my child and you also.

Carl.— I swear to you ——

Ritter (*breaking off the conversation*).— Express kindly greetings to my mamma, tell her not to be too saving, and to tell me if she needs anything. And to little Mimi — a kiss from Uncle Henry. Have a good time during vacation, and study hard next semester. Where are you going?

Carl.— To Berlin.

Ritter.— Hm, hm. Let us hear from you.

Carl (*passionately*).— Whole pages — and you will surely send me tidings as to how she is getting along, the only one.

Ritter (*kindly*).— You shall know all. Every cough.

Carl.— Possibly the hour will come when you see ——

Ritter.— When you get to Treuchtlingen order some little sausages, they are delicious ——

Carl.— I shall remember it. Oh, if you knew how hard it is ——

Ritter.— For heaven's sake don't get excited, or I cannot allow you to go in after all. Cool blood! I shall depend upon you. I'll knock and see. (*Knocks gently.*)

Sabine (*voice within*).— Come in.

Ritter (*pushes the door back a little*).— Can any one come in? Carl is here. He would like to say good by.

Sabine (*enters the door*).— Please — (*comes forward into the room*). Good afternoon.

(CARL *bows.*)

(SABINE *directs a quick questioning glance toward* RITTER.)

Ritter (*answers with an assuring gesture of the hand*).— Bonnie's condition permits it ——

Sabine.— Without a doubt. (*To* CARL.) But please do not allow her to talk loud or much.

Ritter (*pushes* CARL *in through the door*).— Here, Bonnie — here you have your faithful one. But don't chatter too much. (*He closes the door.*)

Sabine.— Isn't that dangerous?

Ritter.— I have exacted his word of honor. He himself is already in the stage of transition. He feels awfully unhappy and will eat little sausages in Treuchtlingen. What was I going to — I wanted to ask you something. Correct. Tell me frankly. The eye is not disfigured?

Sabine.— Not at all. The upper lid covers the excision in the iris completely. By that she is also protected from excessive light.

Ritter.— You know my mother asked — of course, women — vanity is uppermost.

Sabine.— You surely are also better satisfied that it has transpired without cosmetic disfiguring. And above all, Isolde.

Ritter.— That is natural for a young girl. Oh, I am glad, I tell you. Well, and you. Now don't make such a wise face It becomes you much better to look a little frightened and stupid. Or beaming all over, as you came out after the operation. How cute you were in your white gown and white hood. Like a cook. How? In that moment I pardoned you for everything. All your godlessness and materialism.

Sabine.— Why don't I believe in St. Cecilia ——

Ritter.— That, too, without inner conviction — not unconditionally.

Sabine.— No, not unconditionally.

Ritter.— Do you see — and for that reason nothing worth while comes of it. Possibly you will still break yourself of it — the critical habit.

Sabine.— Then it will have to come quickly. I haven't spoken to you about it during the whole time — the Berlin matter is becoming serious ——

Ritter.— Serious — how so?

Sabine.— I received news to-day again — I have prospects of going in four weeks, or even earlier ——

Ritter.— You are intending to leave us. And you suppose that I shall permit that?

Sabine (*blushes and braces up a little*).— Oh ——

Ritter.— Well — can you really do that? How are you going to exist without us?

Sabine (*confused and moved*).— And if it — and if it is ever so hard for me to leave you — it is my duty.

Ritter.— Duty — bosh. Now for once, you have a few people who are interested in you, and now you want to run away. You!—and go! You must not go to Berlin! A fine hole. Every ass has reason there. Why,

what more do you want than you have here? The professor has the greatest respect for you, all the assistants adore you ——

Sabine.— I must work toward an absolutely independent position. And in a metropolis I can learn more and be of greater use.

Ritter.— Why in the world an independent position — as you call it? By all means, Doctor Sabine Graef. First, you will not attain it in our present world order; second, it has no value whatever. You practise your calling this way or that. Isn't that enough?

Sabine (*evasively*).— But I am looking forward to a definite field, and for that ——

Ritter.— Twaddle! Excuses! Miss Graef!! Are you really made up solely of science and humanitarianism? Not a little bit of the woman left? With peculiar feelings and peculiar longings?

Sabine (*painfully wringing her hands*).— It will not avail me. I must go to Berlin. I must.

Ritter.— Why with whom am I going to fight if you are no longer here? With no human being have I fought as much as with you; except with Hanslick, the fierce exponent of Brahms. I had such a void in me before you came, didn't I?

Sabine.— Because you lack your profession; because you must again have a field of activity ——

Ritter.— No. Also formerly. With all my activity. Even with Elizabeth —— (*Breaks off.*) I lacked something. (*Going up and down, wholly lost in thought, quite unintentionally.*) I was always waiting for something. And then you came, dear, and I became happy, and you want to go away again. I shall certainly not be such a fool. I'll not let you. That's what. That settles it. Do you hear? (*At the last word he recollects, and awakes as from a dream.*) Yes, wh — yes, of course. (*Sincerely.*) Now I first notice it, dear. For that reason! Don't you notice it? (*Runs toward* SABINE, *takes her into his arms. From the moment he has first called her dear, she has grown pale perceptibly.*) I may — may I not?

(SABINE *slowly sinks down against him, fainting.*)

Ritter.— Sabine — girlie — who would be so stupid as that? Why, I am not going to harm you. Just look at me.

Sabine (*slowly recovering*).— Oh — excuse me — but —— (*Raises her hand toward her heart.*)

Ritter (*lets her down on a chair*).— Do say something — or I shall think you do not like me.

Sabine (*raising her eyes to him half painfully, half blissfully*).— If — if I am good enough for you ——

Ritter.— It will do, my youngster. It will do. I am satisfied with you. You little childlike thing. The devil, but I am old for you. Possibly I'll soon turn gray.

Sabine (*lowly, but with supreme happiness*).— Just do! Now nothing can displease me.

Ritter.— But I don't want to get old. I want to be young for my pretty wife — and I want you to like me.

Sabine (*from the depths of her heart, pressing his hands to her breast*). Oh — I like you.

Ritter.— Just say Henry to me.

(SABINE *hesitates a little.*)

Ritter.— Well? Obey!

Sabine (*gently and quickly*).— Henry.

Ritter.— That is right. You will obey anyhow. New-fashioned whims are disposed of. That is, you can go on doctoring. (*Looking at her.*) Oh, do whatever you care to. If you only love me. No, I do say, such happiness for my old age. I could just cry out for joy. And mother! Why she will —— (*Loses control of his voice.*)

Sabine (*seized by a sudden shudder, pointing to* ISOLDE'S *door*).— And ——?

Ritter (*blissful, excited, speaking in confusion*).— Bonnie? Well, if she doesn't — she might properly kiss your very shoes. You have saved more than her life for her and in addition have cared for her like a half dozen of mothers. She will be in ecstasy. Why of course, I know my child. Only it must go forward rapidly now. I can not await the moment when I shall have you in my house. Announcements will be out to-morrow — my baptismal certificate can surely be found somewhere — you are a Catholic, aren't you?

Sabine.— I am without creed.

Ritter.— Holy smoke, such craziness! You'll see what inconveniences that will cause us now. Didn't you think of that at the time?

Sabine.— Six years ago?

Ritter (*angrily*).— A church ceremony is out of the question then. Of course. Too stupid! They could have had such a fine chorus. But you will put on a dress — I tell you. One of those white ones — so bridal. And one of those veils — down over the face — and some of those green leaves — you know well enough what I mean. You will look charming. (*Puts one of his arms around her waist and goes about in the room with her.*) Now isn't this a hundred thousand times finer than your whole scurvy medicine comedy?

Sabine (*leaning her head against his shoulder*).— It is *finer.*

Ritter.— I shall teach you to be happy. You'll get a flogging if you are not happy. And I'll drive out all of your old reason.

Sabine.— I'll become quite stupid — quite blissfully stupid.

Ritter (*taking her head between his hands*).— Just see how I can take hold of you now. I may do that now, I may. That is my privilege. I may even —— (*hesitates*). Don't laugh at me. I haven't the courage for that yet. There is such a fine air of being untouched about you. Surely no one has ever given you one?

Sabine.— No one — except my father.

Ritter.— Thank God. It would have made me quite unhappy, if —— But do tell me something. Am I your ideal?

Sabine (*looks at him and rushes into his arms*).— Much better.

Ritter (*caressing the crown of her head and swaying her to and fro*).— My dear little alto voice that never separates her teeth when she sings. (*He sees that* SABINE *is weeping.*) But you little scamp, why what's the matter with you? Why in the world are you crying?

Sabine.— Because I am so happy.

(*Pause.*)

Sabine (*disengages herself from him*).— Oh, Henry — it must be late already. Why, how late is it? Why, I must go home.

Ritter.— Please — aren't you at home?

Sabine (*moving her cheek over his shoulder*).— I shall be. But must I not go to the clinic — I must see — the patients operated upon this morning ——

Ritter.— Surely Horn can do that for once.

Sabine.— No, I must prepare the new bandage myself, or I shall have no peace. And to-day, when — to-day it would be a sin. I beg you. To-day I should so much like to take all pain out of the world. No. (*Quickly puts on her hat and jacket.*)

Ritter (*grumbling a little as he goes into his room*).— But I want to be the main figure.

Sabine (*looks toward* ISOLDE'S *door, seized by the same kind of a shudder as before, then braces up proudly*).— And what of it!

Ritter (*comes back with his hat, umbrella, and overcoat*).— I shall accompany you. You will accustom yourself to that regularly now. My fiancée is a lady, not a doctor. Please give me your arm, madam.

(SABINE *timidly takes his arm.*)

Ritter (*taking a few steps toward the veranda with her*).— Why you started with the left foot. Hold on! With the right one! That's it. You still have much to learn, my child. And now keep step. One, two — one, two —— (*From counting he makes a transition into marked rhythmic singing. The melody of the bridal chorus from 'Lohengrin.'*) Lalalala — lalalala ——

(*Out over the veranda with* SABINE. *After a few moments the door of* ISOLDE'S *room is opened.*)

Carl (*looks out, then speaks back into the room*).— Skipped — seems so at least. (*Pushes the door open farther.*) May you really ——

Isolde (*appears in the door. She wears a white negligee dress with a train, her braids hang down and are not tied with ribbons. Her face is pale and thin. Gray eyeglasses much darker than the former ones. She is apathetic and excited by turns, hysterical and feverish in all of her movements, as she drags herself forward with difficulty, supported by* CARL).— I cannot stand it in there any more, everything smells of carbolic acid — and the iodoform. I cannot get the odor out of my nostrils. (*Sinks into a chair.*)

Carl.— Why didn't you come out sooner?

Isolde.— When *she* was here? I cannot bear to see them together. When he runs after her with his eyes. Did you hear him sing awhile ago?

Carl (*sad and absent-minded*).— Yes, yes — Gaudeamus.

Isolde.— He sings *so* much now — like one of the theater force.

Carl.— Of course, because you are out of the woods again.

Isolde.— And because she did her work so well. Oh, Carl, if I had only seized her knife so she would have slashed my eye. If I had only dared! I hate her, I hate her.

Carl.— Bonnie, why she is going to Berlin — surely; didn't I hear it?

Isolde.— Then he will think of her. You will see, he will think of her. Possibly they will even write. I do not want to — I do not want to be grateful to her.

Carl.— But if she has saved you after all ——

Isolde.— What has she? Who knows but I should have had less pain if Berger had performed the operation? Oh — it is too horrible, when one lies there and the blood — oh! She was like a piece of ice — she didn't tremble ——

Carl.— Why she could not ——

Isolde.— And what if she *did* take care of me — she does not love me in spite of all. Doesn't love me. *She* looks down upon me — I feel that. I will not allow myself to be despised — I will not allow — oh! if I could do something — do something to her so papa won't care for her any more ——

Carl (*blurting out*).— And I am not permitted to save you! I must leave you! Now! The only one who —— (*He falls upon his knees before her.*) And I am not even permitted to tell you.

Isolde (*suspiciously*).— What — what are you not permitted to tell me?

Carl.— Not even this tiny comfort, of pouring out my heart ——

Isolde (*with dry throat and bounding voice*).— What — you know something ——

Carl.— I cannot tell you, I cannot break my vow ——

Isolde.— To whom did you — what did you vow ——

Carl.— To your cruel father, that I would not tell you! Or he would not have allowed me to see you. And am I not going away? I have pledged my honor to him ——

Isolde.— That makes no difference — you must tell me ——

Carl.— Oh, Isolde, I am willing to die for you — but I cannot do that. I cannot forfeit my honor — no student would do that. If you do not guess it ——

Isolde (*looks at him rigidly for a long time*).— Guess ——

Carl (*kisses her hands*).— Your poor hands — why it feels as if you had fire in your hands — do comfort me, Bonnie — I must go directly — in an hour the train leaves ——

Isolde.— Do not go — do not go away, Carl, do not leave me alone ——

Carl.— I must go — haven't I my ticket for the sleeper ——

Isolde (*breaking out in hysterical laughter*).— And he goes away and tells me nothing. (*Pushes him away from her.*) Just go, I know anyhow!!

Carl.— You cannot know — the monstrous thing.

Isolde.— I am not as stupid as you think. I can reel it from my five fingers. Just go away forever. The whole world deserts me. That's all right. You shall rue it when you have ruined me.

Carl.— Oh, Bonnie, you are lacerating me. (*Looks at his watch.*) I must go! It is high time. Oh, grant me one thing. Oh, please — a kiss. There is nothing in that anyhow.

Isolde.— There is nothing at all in that, you might have had that long ago, if you hadn't been so stupid.

Carl (*embraces and kisses her passionately, then tears himself away, seizes his umbrella, hat, and overcoat, and is about to rush out over the terrace*).— Farewell — forever. (*When he opens the glass door, storm and rain beat in upon him. He starts back.*) Oh — I must, after all, put on my coat — there is such a downpour —— (*He opens his umbrella.*) Farewell, Isolde — I am going out into the night. (*He goes without closing the door tightly enough for the bolt to latch. It has grown very dark.*)

Isolde (*stammering to herself as if in a fever*).— Stepmother — stepmother. (*There is a gentle knock at the door.*)

(ISOLDE *does not answer.*)

Anna (*pokes her head through the door*).— Miss Ritter alone — Mr. Carl ——

Isolde (*moves her hand toward the glass door*).— Is papa — I want him ——

Anna.— Mr. Ritter's been a-gone fur a long time — with Miss Doctor — arm in arm.

Isolde (*shrinks*).— What did he — what did he do ——

Anna.— Had 'er by the arm.

(ISOLDE *rears up.*)

Anna (*coming up anxiously*).— Papa'll come soon — sure ——

Isolde.— I do not need him any more — I do not want him any more. Bring me — bring me — why don't you bring it to me?

Anna.— Bring what, Miss?

Isolde.— Why, I told you — the red — the lavender salts in the red box — because I have — a headache ——

(ANNA *hurries into* ISOLDE'S *room.*)

(ISOLDE *tears at the lace of her dress in dumb rage until several tatters hang down, pulls the roses from the bowl, tears out the leaves and throws them on the floor, bites her hands until she sinks back half fainting.*)

(ANNA *comes back, places the red plush box beside* ISOLDE.)

Isolde.— Go out — I want to be entirely alone — no one is to come in — no one.

(ANNA *slowly off into the anteroom.*)

Isolde (*opens the lid of the box, hunts the flagon with trembling hands and tries to read the label in the twilight. With a deep breath.*) That is it! (*With a very loud voice.*) I have courage — I will have courage — and I will —— (*She hurriedly loosens her braids so that her hair falls loosely over her shoulders. She gets up, shakes her hair back and again reaches for the flagon. Shaken with fever and in a loud voice.*) I have courage — I really have courage — Our Father — who — art — Papa!! Why do not let me die — why I do not want to! — I *have* courage —— (*She pulls the stopper out of the bottle, brings it to her lips, at the same moment hurls it from her, crying out as she falls on the floor.*) I cannot — I —— (*The storm opens the glass door violently, storm and rain rush in.* ISOLDE, *seized by the cold, groans once more and remains lying unconscious.*)

Ritter (*comes stamping hastily over the terrace*).— Lalalala. Confound it — some one has failed again to close the door tightly. (*He tries to close the door against the storm. He succeeds, fastens the bolt and stumbles on. He has taken a box of matches out of his pocket, and tries to light them as he goes forward. He strikes his foot against* ISOLDE.) Darned footstool. (*The match is lighted, he looks at the floor, utters a piercing shriek, the match falls and goes out.*)

Ritter (*crouching down rapidly at* ISOLDE'S *side*).— My child — my child. What in the world has happened? (*He lifts her up, calling loud.*) Anna, Anna — Babine — my child — Anna ——

(ANNA *comes rushing in with a candle, several moments later,* BABINE.)

Ritter.— What has happened here — what did you do to the child? Water — water.

(BABINE *takes a glass from the serving table and sprinkles* ISOLDE's *brow.*)

Ritter.— Run — run. To the city — get Sabine — my child, oh, my child, do not die — get Sabine.

(ANNA *and* BABINE *run out.*)

Isolde (*groaning, with all the strength that remains to her*).— Not — not *her!*

Ritter (*stands a moment as if petrified, totters, lets* ISOLDE *glide into the armchair, staggers to the door*).— Anna — the professor — get Professor Berger — the professor himself — not Miss Graef —— (*Coming back into the room he partially collapses.*) Not — her!

ACT V

Bright autumn day. The glass door is opened. Withered foliage has been blown on the threshold. Cool sunshine in the garden. RITTER, *stooped and with careworn, aged face at the piano, staring before him in a tired manner.* ISOLDE *sits in the armchair, emaciated, with transparent features and almost white lips, totally blind. She has a bowl in which beans, lentils, peas, and rice grains are mixed, and picks them out, carefully feeling them with her fingertips, in order to place each kind into separate wooden bowls, four of which are on the table.*

Isolde (*turns her head toward the door at the right, supposing* RITTER *to be there*).— Papa — just see whether I am doing it right. I believe I have put a pea into the lentils there ——

Ritter (*coming up*).— I am here, child, here.

Isolde (*turns her head in the direction of the voice*).— Oh, yes, I thought you were at the door. (*Feels over the first bowl.*) All beans?

Ritter (*passing his fingers through them*).— All beans.

Isolde (*pointing to the second bowl*).— Peas?

Ritter.— There is one lentil — two. You were possibly mistaken in the bowl.

Isolde.— I *probably* did not pay close attention. And the lentils?

Ritter (*passing his fingers through the contents of the third bowl*).— One pea. But that one is really exactly like a lentil.

Isolde.— And the rice.

Ritter.— That — that is *all* right. Why, you are already a little master.

Isolde (*joyously*).— Isn't that true? I am getting along much better

by this time. The first time! Why I got them all mixed. Now I shall soon get braiding work, and then I'll braid you a pretty waste basket. Just as beautiful as those made by the most skillful blind people in the institute for the blind.

(RITTER *presses his fists against his mouth, as if to suppress a shriek, and turns away.*)

Isolde (*after she has waited a moment for an answer*).— Won't that please you, papa?

Ritter (*tired*).— Oh, yes, my child.

Isolde (*puts the bowl in her lap back on the table, continually groping carefully*).— But now I shall stop after all. Finally one's finger-tips itch all over from the everlasting feeling and feeling, and one does not detect a thing any more. (*She gets up.*)

Ritter (*makes an anxious gesture toward her*).— Take care — you will bump yourself.

Isolde.— Oh, you foolish papa, you don't know at all how well I can do it by this time, going by myself. (*Extends her hands in the wrong direction warding him off.*) Just let me go.

Ritter.— You will hurt yourself ——

Isolde (*slowly going toward her bedroom*).— Not in the least. There — is the chair — and there — the table — and now I'll go around there — and now I must make straight for the door. (*Takes a few steps more quickly and runs into the door.*) Oh!

Ritter (*hurries toward her*).— Do you see — do you see!

Isolde.— It doesn't hurt me at all. That was only an accident. All that is necessary is not to confuse me when I am going.

Ritter.— I am so anxious — lest some time you will fall ——

Isolde.— I shall not fall, papa — just go away — you will see how very nicely I will get back to my chair. Now I am — just learning to walk a second time. (*Sits down in the chair.*) Here we are. Don't you admire me?

Ritter (*sorrowfully bowing over her*).— Yes.

(*Pause.*)

Isolde.— You are awfully quiet, papa, you talk so little — you must at last go out again — to the city.

Ritter.— I have nothing to do in the city.

Isolde.— So you can tell me something. For six whole weeks you have not stepped out of the house.

Ritter.— Nothing is going on in the city.

Isolde (*shaking her head*).— But you *will* have to go down again. You are so quiet.

Ritter (*takes her hand*).— Let me stay with you, Bonnie.

Isolde (*stroking his hands*).— Poor papa. And you never play any more, either.

Ritter.— If you wish — shall I play Chopin for you — the nocturne — with the beautiful middle part?

Isolde (*eagerly*).— No, no. You don't like to play it anyhow. And I don't like it as much any more. I shall ask you for something else.

Ritter.— For something else? What, pray tell!

Isolde.— I should have thought of it before, and always forgot it — in my carelessness. Do you know, the little girl of Mrs. Blättner, who reads for me — she really has much talent for the piano — the girl —you know — whether you would not give her lessons?

Ritter.— Why, have you heard her?

Isolde.— No — but her mother says she has much talent.

Ritter.— The mother!

Isolde.— Well, you *can* hear her some time — and if it is true — then you will give her lessons — for my sake.

Ritter.— Whatever you wish — all that you wish.

Isolde (*hums to herself gently*). 'At the quiet hearth in winter'—— (*stops.*) Has the letter carrier been here?

Ritter.— Yes, as long as an hour ago.

Isolde.— Already so late — did he bring anything?

Ritter.— From Carl — a few words.

Isolde.— Hm — what?

Ritter.— How you are getting along — wants me to write him explicitly. What am I to write to him? I do not know how I am to tell him.

Isolde.— You can tell him without any misgivings whatever Do you know what he will do? He will cry terribly and cast himself on the floor and scratch the wood with his hands — and if he runs a splinter in, take it out with a disinfected needle. And then he will put on a very long tragic, beautiful face. Yes. And, therefore, you may as well write him without misgivings.

Ritter.— And grandma?

Isolde.— In grandma's case — possibly it would be better if one told her — by word of mouth.

Ritter.— Tell — who — I?

Isolde.— Or I.

Ritter.— Why how — should she come here?

Isolde.— Why I could go there — back — to Vienna?

Ritter.— To — Vienna?

Isolde (*stroking her knees, a little wearily but gently*).— I really don't know why I should stay here — it is all over anyhow. The professor himself has said that they cannot help me any more. Why I am quite satisfied. I just mean — so there is no further reason to remain here. Aren't we here on account of the professor? And if he can help no more ——

Ritter (*repeating in a monotone*).— Can help — no more. But see here, Bonnie — you did not exactly agree — get along with grandma——

Isolde.— Then, then. I simply did not have to. To-day — I must.

Ritter.— Why do you have to?

Isolde (*moving her head to and fro gently*).— I must, I must. And matters will go better with grandma now. Tell me, papa — quite frankly — have I become very ugly?

Ritter.— No — certainly not.

Isolde.— But the eyes — entirely dull and staring.

Ritter (*gently*).— Why, they are not seen — when you have your glasses on.

Isolde.— And I'll never take them off before grandma. Never. You will see, when I have a fine black dress on — one made at the establishment of Spitzer — quite slender and quite pale, and my blond braids on the black dress — then people will still say: the poor, pretty thing. And grandma will cry, but she will love me very much nevertheless from pity and pride. (*She laughs gently.*) That's the way of it. Very certainly. I know my good people.

Ritter (*painfully incredulous*).— Wonder whether you are right, Bonnie — whether it will last ——

Isolde (*eagerly*).— Oh, I am right. I have become smarter, anyhow. Don't you find that to be the case, too, papa? It is strange. Formerly I always believed I had to have this and that and that — and now I see that one must not have it at all and one does not become unhappy on that account. If one has his little food and beans and lentils and peas to play with — I need nothing else at all. (*With forced gayety.*) Not even you, papa.

Ritter.— Don't say that, Bonnie. Why, it's the only comfort that is left to me that I am with you.

Isolde.— That is quite beautiful. But you can surely not always stay with me.

Ritter.— I want to stay with you always.

Isolde.— No, papa, that would be very unwise of me. You would soon be tired of me. One imagines that at the beginning, that the sympathy will continue forever. That isn't at all possible. Some day you will be accustomed to it, that I — that I — do not see, and on that day you will be tired of me.

(RITTER *turns away from her with a gesture of despair.*)

Isolde (*waiting for an answer*).— Well?

Ritter.— What?

Isolde.— I was thinking, you would tell me something.

(RITTER *is silent.*)

Isolde.— You are a morose creature. You haven't even called me a goose any more. Are you ill, since you don't scold?

Ritter.— No.

Isolde.— Yes — no. No — yes. Papa, I am going to send you on a journey.

Ritter.— Now don't jest.

Isolde.— If a fellow takes a trip,
He has something to relate,
So I took my hat and grip,
And recognized my fate.
Therefore, Mr. Man, you will travel.

Ritter (*begins to get an inkling of her intention, with bated breath*).—Where, pray tell? I have no interest anywhere.

Isolde.— Why do you believe that the people who go traveling all have an interest somewhere? You should get diversion — to Dresden — Leipzig — possibly Berlin.

Ritter (*looking at* BONNIE *closely*).— No, Bonnie.

Isolde (*stubbornly*).— But why not, pray tell. You have never been there. And it certainly is now the center of things.

Ritter.— And what will you do when I am gone?

Isolde.— I? I shall think of you, and be alone. No, I mean be alone and think of you.

Ritter.— You do not prefer to have me with you.

Isolde (*evasively*).— Prefer? One prefers many things, and if one does not have them it is no misfortune after all.

Ritter (*gently imploring*).— Don't you want to go with me?

Isolde.— Where — with you?

Ritter.— To — Berlin?

Isolde (*bounding up with all her former passion and lack of self-control*).— Never! Never! Never!

(*Pause.*)

(ISOLDE *has sunk back completely in her chair, she trembles and buries her teeth in her lips.*)

Ritter (*passes his hand over his brow, goes to* ISOLDE *and puts his hands up to her head*).— My child, my child — we shall go back to Vienna. Both of us — but not live with grandma — not on dusty Prater Street. We will

find something out in the cottage district — something pretty — with a yard. And there we shall be together — every day — and be happy.

Isolde.— No, papa, no, you are not to sacrifice yourself for me.

Ritter.— I beg you, let me stay with you.

Isolde (*is quiet, then cries out in torment*).— If I could only see you, if I could only see you! — not on account of seeing, I should only like to know what kind of a face you are making — that patient one with the quiet eyes — oh, papa, not the patient one, not the patient one. Oh, if I were only dead, if I had only had the courage!

Ritter (*on his knees before her, kissing her hands*).— And I beg you to live, to stay with me, with your old papa, who has nothing left in the wide world but you.

Isolde (*in torment*).— But I *do* know — and even if you say no a hundred times, don't I feel it ——

Ritter.— What do you know ——

Isolde.— She ——

Ritter (*getting up, forcing himself to complete calmness*).— Have you it in your head still, the foolish stuff? How did you work yourself into that?

Isolde.— Why, I certainly don't have you any more. Even if you are with me. I do not have you any more. Therefore, I prefer to give you up entirely. I have made up my mind to become very reasonable. You like reasonable people better than unreasonable ones. Therefore I want to become reasonable. As much so as I can.

Ritter.— And I want to do anything for your sake.

Isolde.— Do for my sake — but love ——

Ritter (*gently*).— Love you. Love you.

Isolde (*reaches out to fondle his face*).— Oh, papa, if it were possible for you to forgive me — because I myself *am* to blame, that things went so amiss. You shall see, I still can learn all sorts of things. If you would some time care to read to me from serious books — (*somewhat timidly*) Kant — do you suppose?

Ritter.— You good creature. No, no. Tax your poor head ——

Isolde.— Now it isn't poor at all. I no longer have pain. After all that is an enormous blessing. Oh, the pain — the last pain — when my vision was gone ——

Ritter.— Don't think of it, Bonnie. Think of Vienna, and how you will arrange matters for yourself there.

Isolde.— Papa! In Vienna there are surely also poor children. Don't you think I could arrange a school for little children — just think — and give them new aprons; and if there are very many clever ones among them, possibly one with genius might be among them that otherwise

would be lost — that surely would be noble of me — of us — for you also must help ——

Ritter.— Build air castles.

Isolde.— You see I have a whole mountain of time.

(ANNA *comes running up quickly over the veranda, handing* RITTER *a calling card.*)

Ritter (*changes color, places his finger on his lips, and asks, scarcely audibly*).— Where?

(ANNA *points to the garden with her hand.*)

Ritter.— Here.

(ANNA *off into the garden.*)

Isolde.— Papa — isn't some one here?

Ritter.— It was Anna — she will come back directly. Don't you want to go to the garden with her? Before the sun is down? Later it will be too damp. You have been out of doors so little to-day.

Isolde (*gets up*).— Yes — but she must not lead me.

Ritter (*calls into the garden*).— Anna!

Isolde.— She must go along at my side. I shall go alone and count my steps ——

Ritter.— Do be careful.

Isolde.— I already know exactly — even the way around the rotunda — to the door it is twelve steps now. (*Counts as she goes.*) One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve—— (*Remains standing.*)

Ritter.— Two more, child, two more.

Isolde (*angrily*).— Oh — I probably made the steps too short — how stupid!

(ANNA *has come up the steps again with* SABINE, *who remains standing, and crowds back as far as possible in the opening of the door.*)

Isolde.— Why, where is Anna?

(ANNA *steps up to her and offers her arm.*)

Isolde.— You may lead me over the steps, but then let me go immediately. (*Slowly goes down the steps with* ANNA.)

(SABINE *enters, dressed in black. Very pale, with dark rings around her eyes.*)

(RITTER *goes a few steps to meet her, they stand silently facing each other in the center of the room.*)

(SABINE *looks upon his stooped form with extreme pain.*)

Ritter (*finally with a gesture of the hand toward the garden*).— Blind.

Sabine (*gently*).— I know.

(*Pause.*)

Sabine.— I should not have come against your will — if I did not ——

Ritter.— Please sit down.

(SABINE *goes to the other side, sits down in* ISOLDE'S *chair, takes off her hat.*)

Ritter.— Did you — I wrote to you, of course — now didn't I write to you?

Sabine.— Yes.

Ritter.— Were you really able to understand the letter? It was certainly foolish — I was so completely out of joint myself ——

Sabine.— I understood everything. Isolde wanted to commit suicide, because we ——

Ritter.— Because we two — and has become blind. And the fever — oh. Blotted out — every drop of light.

Sabine.— Glaucoma in both eyes — I know — from Berger.

Ritter.— Do pardon me — but I could not let you come any more. She would have become insane on my hands. And I could not get away from her either. I know there has been gossip. That you erred in the operation — and the treatment was wrong ——

Sabine.— Oh, that. As people will talk. I thought only of you.

Ritter.— We told Isolde that you had to go to Berlin suddenly — to the new position ——

Sabine.— For that reason I am coming. I am to go to-morrow.

Ritter (*struck to the quick*).— To-morrow!

Sabine.— Shall I — ? Henry?

Ritter (*puts his hands over his eyes*).— Yes.

(*Pause.*)

Ritter.— I cannot leave her — the blind one, and so I must give you up.

Sabine.— You are not forced to. I have thought it out in the many nights. I want to give up my calling. Entirely. I will go with you — and care for her. I will need nothing for myself. I will be so saving. I will do everything that she desires. Only that I am with you. Only that I am with you.

Ritter.— You precious creature — and if I accept your life as a gift — it will not do. She will consume — consume herself — now I am sure of it.

Sabine.— But what in the world am I claiming? Nothing from you! Understand me, Henry. Nothing. Not your name, not — you! Take me into your house as a nurse — for her. Only that I may be here. That you may not be alone. So deserted — so absolutely deserted — by the eternal — and if she were your wife, she could certainly not deny me that.

Ritter.— And she will not — possibly not — but she will fret herself to death. Talk reason. Talk reason to the blind creature. Demand that unselfishness of the blind creature that we ourselves do not have. Why she is right. A thousand times over. I do not love her — as I do you.

And you love me. Between us she is a supernumerary. Yes, of course. When the lessons come home —— (*He presses the tips of his fingers upon his closed eyelids.*)

(SABINE *stares down at herself.*)

Ritter.— I know quite well, Sabine, that you are saying to yourself that I am a dish-rag. I also know quite well what the stronger course would be. To embark upon a new and stronger life with you — straight ahead — not care a fig for others ——

Sabine.— Then come! Then come!

Ritter.— To be able to! I am simply too weak. I haven't a trace of talent for the heroic. I am a poor scamp and crawl into the corner of the hearth.

Sabine.— After all is she worth having you suffer so for her sake?

Ritter.— I do not know. I only know that she is blind. Blind because of us.

(SABINE *makes a gesture.*)

Ritter.— Never mind. You will not talk me out of that. I have burdened myself with a whole backful of sins. How do I stand before you! What have I not inflicted upon you! Can't you hurry up and forget me?

Sabine (*smiling sadly*).— Hardly think so.

Ritter.— Erase me. Just call up how badly I have behaved toward you. Oh, God! Pardon the old ass, that you made such a deep impression upon him. (*He strokes her head with caressing murmurs. Recollecting the situation.*) Yes — now isn't it true? How stupidly I am parting from you. I am simply so very ordinary.

Sabine (*breaking out*).— But I shall simply die, simply die ——

Ritter (*taking her hands, fervently, with deep emotion*).— Not you. You have the stuff in you to get beyond your own misery. You can become one of those people who overtop all the rest — calm and gigantic. They do not notice it themselves. But the Old Man above pays attention well enough.

Sabine (*stands before him trembling, with glowing face, beside herself*).— But I am not as you imagine — imagine from yourself, because you are so — I am not good — not calm — could I have been with you, I should have overcome it — but go away forever, forever, and never —— (*She presses her hands on her breast.*) There! There! (*She falls on her knees before him.*)

Ritter (*forgetting everything, he draws her up to himself*).— My wife — my wife! (*About to kiss her, he looks into her eyes and comes under the spell of her eyes.*) My wife — I must not wrong you thus. Not thus. (*Re-*

mains motionless a few seconds lost in looking into her eyes, then takes his hands away and folds them before his lips.) Praying — that God — may keep thee — I am a disreputable old fellow. Possibly you say — I am cowardly. But how could I inflict that upon you? You! Do not despise me! Do not despise me!

Sabine (crying out).— Henry! You saintly man —— *(Looking up at him, her head inclined toward the side, her hands folded.)* Now I have peace. Now I am going. *(She turns away and goes slowly. He wants to follow her, she turns him away, extending her hand backward.)* I must not see you any more. If I see you — I cannot go. *(She disappears into the garden over the steps.)*

(RITTER *looks after her for a long time, then sits down at the piano and weeps bitterly.)*

(Twilight.)

Isolde (voice from the garden).— No, I want to carry it, I want to carry it myself, he will be so pleased!

(RITTER *straightens up, dries his eyes, and blows his nose vigorously.)*

Isolde (eagerly stumbling up over the steps, a sprig of badly dismantled fall roses in her hand, after her ANNA).— Papa, why this is the fourteenth day of the month. Your birthday. And now I have nothing but those last roses. But I picked them myself. And just think, I can distinguish by the odor whether they are red or white. Here — why where are you, papa?

Ritter (has risen and stepped over to her).— Here, my child.

Isolde.— Aren't they beautiful? How *do* they look?

Ritter.— Very beautiful. Don't prick yourself — there are so many thorns.

Isolde.— Anna is to put them in the Venetian vase.

Ritter (gives ANNA *the flowers).*— Yes, indeed.

(ANNA *off into the anteroom.)*

Isolde (hunting for RITTER *with her arms).*— And now give me a kiss, dear papa. I am so happy. *(He kisses her.)* Isn't your cheek moist?

Ritter (wipes it with his handkerchief).— No — I don't know.

Isolde.— Isn't it true, you are fifty to-day? I don't want to become older either. And then you will be eighty. I'll tell you this much right off. When you die, I shall commit sucide. And then I shall have the courage.

(It grows darker and darker.)

Isolde.— And now it has tired me out — in the garden. It's probably evening by this time?

Ritter.— Yes. It is late.

Isolde.— Is the sun still here?

Ritter.— No, the sun is gone.

Isolde.— Come to me, papa. So it's dark. Formerly I was afraid in the dark, and now I am not at all. Because I am always in it. Is there going to be a moon to-night?

Ritter.— Full moon. Over there — it is just rising above the trees — just look —— (*Recollecting.*) Oh, yes.

Isolde.— Papa, when you tell me about it, I see it with my inner eyes. I am not blind at all. I have an inner vision. It's splendid. Only it's black. It isn't so bad. One can also live in the dark.

Ritter (*has drawn her to his breast*).— Yes, my child — one can also live in the dark. (*They stand together, arm in arm. The bright moonlight falls upon them.*)

THE END

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